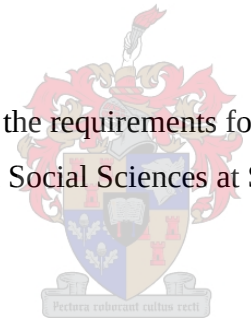
South African Female Subjectivity (1868-1977): Life Writing, the Agentive "I" and Recovering Stories

Lizelle Smit



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Declaration

By submitting this dissertation, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

October 2018

Signed: Lizelle Smit

Abstract

This dissertation investigates the formation of white female subjectivity in the life writing of three South African women, penned between 1868 and 1977. The subjects are: Betty Molteno (1852-1927), Hettie Smit (1908-1973) and Joyce Waring (1914-2003). I consider subjectivity formation as contingent on geo-cultural, historical, ethnic and socio-political contexts, as well as cultural and political markers of identity such as race, gender and ethnicity. My analysis of Molteno's journals, letters, autobiographical poetry and life writing about her, Smit's letters and autobiographical fiction titled *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* [She appears with the Sickle Moon] (1937), and Waring's trilogy of autobiographical texts *I'm no Lady* (1956), *Sticks and Stones* (1969) and *Hot Air* (1977) indicate these three women's subjectivities as embodied and formed relationally. However, differences in their respective constituted subjectivities and the discursive divergences noticeable in their life writing practices are also examined to argue the heterogeneous and multifaceted nature of female subjectivity in the delineated period. Concepts such as "embodiment" (Cahill *Objectification* viii; Anderson 90; Grosz *ix-xi*; Smith *Subjectivity* 14) and "relationality" (Coullie 7; Smith and Watson *Reading* 248; Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 53) are employed throughout my examination of the three selected women's texts. The aim of the project is to examine unknown subjects' or women's life writing which has been neglected in literary scholarship to complement the existing body of work on South African women's life writing. Archives house memories, forgotten texts have important stories to tell: I maintain throughout this dissertation that these unconventional, conflicted and controversial women employed diverse and arresting autobiographical forms to narrate their respective subjectivities; therefore, their materials are worth investigating. By analysing their life writing, I address lacunae in South African scholarship: Molteno's materials engendered a discussion of nineteenth century lesbianism and the Mazdaznan religion. My analysis of Smit's letters enabled me to categorise *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* as the first published Afrikaans autobiographical fiction and to discuss her split subjectivity, or two "I"s, which she respectively named "Hettie" and "Hessie". White middle-class feminism of the 1950-1980s, of which little has been written, and white women's endorsement of apartheid through their writing, which is rare, is made possible through my examination of Waring's autobiographical texts.

Opsomming

Hierdie verhandeling ondersoek die ontwikkeling van wit vroulike subjektiwiteit in die ego-tekste van drie Suid-Afrikaanse vroue gedurende die periode van 1868 tot 1977. Die drie skrywers is: Betty Molteno (1852-1927), Hettie Smit (1908-1973) en Joyce Waring (1914-2003). Ek gaan van die standpunt uit dat hierdie ontwikkeling in subjektiewe gewaarwording afhang van die geo-kulturele, historiese, etniese and sosio-politieke kontekste, sowel as dié van kulturele en politieke identiteitsmerkers soos ras, gender en etnisiteit. My analise van Molteno se joernale, briewe, outobiografiese gedigte sowel as ego-dokumente geskryf oor haar deur ander, Smit se briewe en outobiografiese fiksie, getiteld *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* [She appears with the Sickle Moon] (1937), asook Waring se trilogie van outobiografiese tekste *I'm no Lady* (1956), *Sticks and Stones* (1969) en *Hot Air* (1977), toon duidelik dat die onderskeie vroue se subjektiewe bewussyn ontwikkel het in 'n parallelle verhouding tot bogenoemde kontekste. Die verskille in die daargestelde subjektiwiteit tussen die verskillende vroue word ook ondersoek. Hierbenewens word die afwykings in die diskoers van die onderskeie ego-tekste ontleed om sodoende die heterogene en veelvlakkige aard van vroulike subjektiwiteit in die aangeduide periode aan te toon. Konsepte soos "vergestalting" (Cahill *Objectification* viii; Anderson 90; Grosz *ix-xi*; Smith *Subjectivity* 14) en "relasionaliteit" (Coullie 7; Smith and Watson *Reading* 248; Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 53) word deurgaans gebruik in my bespreking van die tekste van die drie gekose vroue. Die doel van die ondersoek is om onbekende vroulike ego-dokumente, wat tot dusver meerendeels verontagsaam was in die bestaande Suid-Afrikaanse literêre studies, aan te spreek, sowel as om die bestaande werk oor ego-tekste deur Suid-Afrikaanse vroue aan te vul. Herinneringe word in argiewe gehuisves. Vergete tekste omsluit belangrike verhale. Ek handhaaf die mening regdeur my verhandeling dat hierdie onkonvensionele, gefolterde, kontroversiële vroue verskillende, maar tegelykertyd boeiende, outobiografiese skryfstyle ingespan het om hul onderskeie vroulike bewussyn uit te beeld. Hierdie tekste verdien dus om ondersoek te word. Deur die onderskeie ego-tekste te ondersoek, spreek ek leemtes in die Suid-Afrikaanse kritiek aan. Molteno se werk het 'n gesprek oor lesbianisme in die neëntiende eeu vereis sowel as 'n ondersoek na Mazdanianisme. My analise van Smit se briewe het my tot die oortuiging gebring dat *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* as die eerste gepubliseerde Afrikaanse outobiografiese fiksie beskou kan word. Ek kon verder ook haar gesplete self-bewussyn, of die twee ego's, wat sy onderskeidelik "Hettie" en "Hessie" genoem

het, identifiseer. Die feminisme van die wit middelklas gedurende 1950-1980, ’n onderwerp wat grootliks geïgnoreer is, sowel as die onderskrywing van die beleid van apartheid deur blanke vrouens (waaroor daar inderdaad min navorsing beskikbaar is) word bevestig deur my bespreking van Waring se ego-dokumentasie.

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"[…]

Maar dít sal een en enkeld bly,

En aards en diep sy laafnis kry,

Al staan dit winter, kaal in my,

Die liefde in my, die liefde in my"

- N.P. van wyk Louw -

(Uittreksel uit "Die liefde in my")

Mulungu ndiye chikondi, *Alemekezeke Mulungu*, "ja, my erfenis is vir my mooi".

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Chapter One
Introduction

This thesis investigates the life writing of three white South African women and life writing about them penned over the course of more than a century, from 1868 to 1977, to suggest the three subjects' female subjectivity of the demarcated period as both relational and embodied. The three subjects, listed chronologically according to dates of birth, are Elizabeth Maria (Betty) Molteno (1852-1927), Hettie Smit (married surname Van Vuuren, 1908-1973) and Joyce Waring, née Barlow (1914-2003). Before introducing the concern of this dissertation about how a subject's life writing can challenge, even change, public perceptions of women's position in history and society, I begin with a literary anecdote narrated in the autobiographical fiction *A Change of Tongue*[1] (2003) by esteemed South African author Antjie Krog. In the narrative, the narrator recalls a poignant event from her childhood. She remembers how she "blot[ted] out the face" (64) of Lady Anne Barnard with ink in her high school history book because she was the only woman to be mentioned "in her own right" (64) in the prescribed text, yet she was primarily recalled in historical texts written by men for her "flawless beauty" (64), as a capable hostess who organised extravagant and sophisticated parties at the Cape Town Castle. For the young Krog, Barnard did not "deserve a place in a book of history if she was unable to do something worthwhile with her life" (64). Later, as an adult woman and established poet, Krog, in search of a "possible hero" (*Lady Anne: A Chronicle in Verse* 118), revisits and reimagines the life of Lady Anne Barnard in her poetry collection titled *Lady Anne* (1989). There are two prominent speakers in the collection, the poet 'Krog' speaking her own life through the lens of Lady Barnard, and the poet speaking for/as/about Lady Barnard. A strenuous, at times even combative relationship forms between the two speakers. The speaker Krog, in addressing Barnard, scathingly notes: "as a metaphor, my lady, / you're not worth a fuck" (*Down to My Last Skin* "Lady Anne as guide" 73),[2] and she has "sharpened [her] blade" for Barnard since her youth (*Down* "you are being remembered for your parties Lady Anne" 76). In other poems in the collection, however, the speaker expresses her love, admiration and

[1] *A Change of Tongue* is the second book in the trilogy of creative non-fiction published by Antjie Krog. The first is a *Country of my Skull* (1998) and the last, *Begging to be Black* (2009).
[2] *Down to My Last Skin* (2000) and *Skinned* (2013) are collections of English translations of Krog's Afrikaans poetry.

fondness for Barnard.[3] Despite this affinity, the speaker remains critical of Lady Anne's "complete utter radiant uselessness" ("remembered for your parties" 77) throughout the collection, maintaining her original stance that Barnard's life exemplified "layers of white privilege" (*A Chronicle in Verse* 120) possibly not deserving of a place in history books. Barnard's own letters and diaries, however, contest such a reductive perception of her life. In her own accounts she emerges as a woman whose life cannot be reduced to the image of a hostess of grand parties or attractive, powdered socialite. Her writing portrays her as an adventurous traveller, able organiser (of more than parties), keen social observer, and deft, dexterous writer.[4]

This literary anecdote encapsulates some key concerns I grapple with in this research project, namely: South African history, at least until the latter part of the twentieth century, was written by men; the androcentric construction of the country's written history necessarily excluded, or neglected to mention, many women who contributed significantly to the country's socio-political and cultural frameworks. Moreover, although Barnard features in history books, almost a century passed before *her* writing was read and *her* perspective was included in a discussion of the socio-cultural and political milieu of the eighteenth-century Cape Colony (Krog *A Chronicle in Verse* 118-120). Furthermore, the narrative regarding Krog's writing illustrates her diachronic feminist revision and interpretation of said criteria regarding Barnard's 'inclusion' into written history, and women's (in this narrative, Barnard's and Krog's) struggles to articulate and deploy their subjectivity in a gender-essentialist society. My interest in this thesis is to address, at least partly, questions such as: what is revealed about the selected subjects' thoughts, on a variety of issues, in their writing? In what way did historical scholarship and literary historiography in South Africa ignore these three women's life writing? What can scholars learn about the socio-historical and cultural-political frameworks in the demarcated period by investigating neglected women's life writing retrieved from the archives? In what way did Molteno, Smit and Waring contribute to the

[3] The poet Krog writes for example: "you have become beautiful to me / and movingly brave" (*Down* "remembered for your parties" 76).

[4] As is evidenced in Lady Anne Barnard's diaries and letters depicting her experiences in the interior of the now Western Cape (South Africa) of the late eighteen and early nineteenth century, she was more than a socialite (Krog *A Chronicle in Verse* 118-119). She enthusiastically narrates her travels in ways that suggest a keen observing eye/I, commenting on her interest in people, culture, history, social conditions and so forth. Her observations bring insights to circumstances and events of the time, absent from travel accounts by men, such as the conditions of farmers and slaves alike as well as the treatment of Dutch settlers under British administration.

political, literary and cultural landscape of their respective societies? How did the three subjects under discussion write their respective subjectivities? My aim in this dissertation, therefore, is to contribute to the existing scholarly archive on South African women's life writing. This input will be made by examining women's life writing from the archive (Molteno and Smit), thus far neglected, and by investigating the diverging, innovative autobiographical forms they used to write the self, for example the hybrid ensemble form of Waring's autobiographical texts, Molteno's autobiographical poetry and Smit's autobiographical fiction.

My interest in female subjectivity, women's life writing, and the demarcated period of South African history stems from my MA research (2015). In this project, I investigated the autobiographies written by Marina King, Melina Rorke and Petronella van Heerden to argue that these women's voices, situated in the (post)colonial period of South Africa (1854 to 1948), complicate the conventional portrayals identifiable in the fiction written in the period of women as submissive or docile. During my master's research, I encountered many autobiographies and other forms of life writing produced by women of the delineated era; life narratives that have not been investigated by scholars. Although a rich body of women's life writing studies exists in South Africa, my foray into this field, into the archive, brought to my attention a scope of seemingly forgotten texts by and about women of the demarcated period that called for critical inquiry. Moreover, fundamental to my MA project was a focus on female subjectivity. Consequently, I came to realise that such a focus on female subjectivity can be expanded to include additional, forgotten, ignored or underexplored women's life writings. For this purpose, I have chosen to interpret the writings of Molteno, Smit and Waring. In part of the subsequent segment of this introductory section, I provide a rationale for my choice of subjects, sketch a brief biography of each woman's life to situate each subject historically, and discuss my particular interest in their lives and autobiographical forms.

To address the above-mentioned paucity in South African scholarship, this study examines white South African (mid-nineteenth to late-twentieth century) female subjectivity through the genre lens of women's life writing in an effort to: examine the female subject as portrayed and 'told' by herself; to challenge the extant literature produced in or reflective of the delineated period which frames South African women as tractable, servile, subservient and lacking in agency or autonomy; to reintroduce three women's life narratives and involvement in the making and becoming of

contemporary South Africa; to theorise South African embodied female subjectivity as relational, heterogeneous, multiplicitous and versatile, taking into account alternative, controversial and divergent subjectivities; and finally, to propose that a substantial body of writing by female authors remains neglected in literary scholarship. This neglect is regrettably attested to by the fact that women's writing is relegated to forgotten sections in archives and the recesses of libraries. Important here is my focus on the genre of life writing. Life writing has only emerged as a field of literary inquiry over the past few decades in South African scholarship. Despite the growing scholarly archive on women's life writing, there are still numerous under-researched or marginalised examples of women's life writings, and intriguing autobiographical forms that merit critical discussion.

Women's autobiographies were traditionally relegated to the periphery of Western scholarship up until the last two decades of the twentieth century (Smith and Watson (1992, 1998 & 2010); Gilmore (1994); Rajan (1992); Brownley and Kimmich (1999); Paxton (1992) and Chester (1992)). Furthermore, women's life writing has equally been ignored in historical writings (a point I repeatedly return to in this thesis). In recent decades a number of South African critics, such as Jane Watts (1989), Margaret Daymond (1994, 1996, 2006 & 2011), Cherry Clayton (1989), Cherryl Walker (1982 & 1995), Wendy Woodward, Patricia Hayes and Gary Minkley (2002), Louise Viljoen (2007 & 2008), Annemarié van Niekerk (1994 & 1998), Mary West (2009), Elizabeth van Heyningen (1999 & 2013), Sandra Nortje (2007), Judith Lütge Coullie (2004) and Elsie Cloete (1994), have examined different aspects of women's autobiography/life writing in relation to history, culture, female identity and identity construction.[5] As mentioned, my research aims to contribute to the growing field, and to join the academic corps committed to furthering studies in the field. Although many researches are investigating South African women's life writing, a considerable body of women's writing (published and unpublished), produced during the previous two centuries, continues to gather dust in archives and on library shelves. This dearth in archival recovery I find regrettable. Valerie Letcher notes in her bibliography of white women's writing (1800-1940) in Southern Africa that although it might be "justified" in some cases for some texts to be forgotten, if one "considers the historical and literary perspective this engaging

[5] Many other critics have analysed one or two autobiographies within a specific framework. I draw on their work in my analysis.

and diverse body of writing offers, one realises to blot it from memory would be a loss indeed" (121). Before embarking on this doctoral project, I learned much about women's writing of the delineated period, and yet the content, insights, methods and modes used in the three women's life writing I study here never ceased to surprise me, as disturbing as my encounter with, for instance, Waring's work has been. I have come to realise that little is known about the interiority of women of earlier periods and about how they wielded their pens to capture their experiences in a diversity of autobiographical forms.

My interest in the chosen subjects' writing was stimulated on two levels: personal inquisitiveness and academic interest. I briefly explain my choice of subjects.[6] In the English Department of Stellenbosch University, there are three rooms, respectively named the Green, Blue and Yellow Molteno rooms. Incidentally, the department's weekly research seminars take place in the Yellow Molteno room. I used to offer a second-year seminar on South African women's life writing in the blue room. Walking past these rooms every week during my undergraduate and postgraduate studies, I often wondered why the rooms were paying tribute to this 'Molteno' and who *he* was. So, when a friend of mine casually mentioned that I should maybe conduct some research on Betty Molteno if I was interested in female same-sex relationships in nineteenth and twentieth-century South Africa, I jumped at the opportunity to discover all I could about *Betty* Molteno and the family after whom the three venues in the department were named.[7] My investigation revealed that Betty Molteno (1852-1927), eldest daughter of Sir John Molteno, Prime Minister of the Cape Colony from 1872-1878, was by all accounts eccentric, unconventional and rebellious (Simons 34, 39-41).

[6] I specifically chose these women to represent a diversity of voices from different historical periods (structured in chronological order), cultural backgrounds and political beliefs or ideologies to illustrate the heterogeneous nature of South African white female subjectivity. I considered other subjects, such as Caroline van Heyningen, M.E.R., Sarah Gertrude Millin, Elizabeth Jonsson, Iris Vaughan, Sarah Raal and Jane Elizabeth Waterston but selected my subjects for the similarities and discontinuities in their lives and autobiographical forms. It is also important to mention that since the selected subjects were white, literate and educated, they are by no means representative of all South African women, their particular social 'groups' or women who were illiterate. Given that it is not feasible to conduct this study without reading written texts, it is therefore impossible to select subjects who did not write. Furthermore, this project, although interdisciplinary in its approach, is still rooted in literary analysis.

[7] Family of my friend Katherine Morris lives close to a farm where two of Betty Molteno's half-brothers, Ted and Harry Molteno, lived. She heard much about the Molteno family through this connection and did some research of her own about the Molteno family history. During her investigations, she came across some writings about Betty Molteno and her partner, Alice Greene. Knowing of my interest in lesbian studies in South African history, she informed me of her discovery.

My original decision to include her as one of my subjects thus developed from my personal inquisitiveness about the Moltenos and my academic interest in South African queer studies. For my master's project, I explored the silences in Petronella van Heerden's[8] autobiographies surrounding her sexual identity and this research revealed a hiatus in critical studies conducted on lesbianism in South Africa, particularly of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. My inclusion of Molteno's life writing (journals and letters) and life writings about her (i.e. her sister's journal and letters written by her partner Alice Green), produced between 1886 and 1891, is therefore my attempt to address this gap in South African scholarship on lesbianism and related gender discourses. Gender orientation and lesbian discourses (or the lack thereof) in nineteenth-century South Africa, and their influence on the formation of Molteno's subjectivity, are not the only foci of the chapter dealing with Molteno. I further discuss her conversion to the Mazdaznan religion in the 1920s and the influence of this religious orientation on her embodied subjectivity. For my reading in this part of the chapter, I rely on Molteno's detailed journals of the 1920s. To further my interpretation of the subject's thoughts on gender and race, and how these opinions shaped her subjectivity, I examine a selection of her poems from the body of autobiographical poetry produced throughout her life.

The second subject selected for discussion is Hettie Smit, Afrikaans author of *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* [She appears with the Sickle Moon] (1937). *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* (hence referred to as *Sekelmaan*) is a kind of tragic romance, written in sentimental style. It tells in the form of diary entries and letters the story of the protagonist, Maria, falling in love with a young poet, Johan. After Maria realises that Johan does not return her affection, a mysterious alter ego named Marié, an other side of Maria, appears and battles with Maria for mental and physical dominance. The rest of the text chronicles the inner conflicts of Maria and Marié: Maria desires to free herself of her romantic feelings whereas Marié revels in her lovelorn state. Rumour had it that Smit detailed the story of her relationship with acclaimed poet W.E.G. Louw in *Sekelmaan* (Kannemeyer *Geskiedenis* 463; Opperman 66), which piqued my interest, because of my research endeavours to excavate 'truths' of women's lives by examining their life writing. However, Chapter Three illustrates that although this rumour is true, many other fascinating aspects of Smit's life writing

[8] This chapter from the MA thesis has been published in article form. See "'Speaking' and 'silence' in the memoirs of Petronella van Heerden" (Smit 1-11).

still require investigation. One such aspect is that in her personal correspondence Smit wrote letters as two different personas, two "I"s, similar to the Maria/Marié manifestation of *Sekelmaan* in her fiction. My attraction to this seminal Afrikaans narrative and its author was the rumour, circulating among the reading public (which started shortly after its publication and persists to this day), that the novel was based on true events; thus, its autobiographical nuances. This rather sentimental account, I will argue with reference to her letters penned at the time, can indeed be read as autobiographical fiction. While conducting my research for this chapter, and in reading Smit's letters, my focus shifted from an attempt to 'prove' the text as autobiographical fiction to an examination instead of the editorial decisions Smit made to the original real-life letters (now archival documents) which were then published, in part, as *Sekelmaan*. I argue that Smit's internalisation of the gendered nature of Afrikaner nationalism during the 1930s in South Africa influenced many of these editorial decisions. Smit's inclusion in this thesis is important because her letters are representative of the way women's subjectivities were/are produced in reaction to patriarchal societies. Furthermore, her letters were written during a very turbulent period of South African history, which saw the rise of Afrikaner nationalism and its deployment of gendered and racial ideologies that (mis)shaped the future of the country.

The final subject discussed in this dissertation is politician, political journalist, and writer Joyce Waring, née Barlow (1914-2003). Waring produced a trilogy of popular culture political autobiographical texts: *I'm no Lady* (1956), *Sticks and Stones* (1969) and *Hot Air* (1977). Although she and her husband Frank Waring, a Member of Parliament, were originally members of first the South African Party (SAP) and then the United Party (UP), they switched allegiance to the National Party (NP) in 1961 (Waring *Sticks and Stones*). Frank was one of two English-speaking ministers serving in Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd's cabinet of 1961. Life writing anthologist Judith Lütge Coullie reports that Waring is the only English-speaking white woman who published autobiographies in the selected period who outright "endorse[d] the apartheid government" (5) in her writing. Waring's prejudice against other races is troubling and difficult to read; nevertheless, in agreement with South African critic Devi Sarinjeive, I argue that voices like Waring's need to be investigated. In her examination of Coullie's anthology, Sarinjeive argues that Coullie's perfunctory treatment of white women writers such as Waring (who endorsed apartheid) is an epistemological violation (105) that "create[s…] fault lines in the sanitized story of South African women, especially whites" (105). My inclusion of Waring aims to address the 'violation' noted by

Sarinjeive. I agree, to exclude the writing of such subjects is to silence history.[9] Even though Waring's endorsement of apartheid is problematic, my interest in her writing is the innovative forms she utilised to script her subjectivity. I discuss her varied and clever writing strategies developed to critique men and patriarchy, to fashion through self-representation a feisty protagonist. But, as I show, her writing becomes self-defeating in her failure to interrogate the power structures of her society that protect patriarchy and whiteness. Her texts were published at a time when very few 'feminist' texts were written in South Africa and their content, forms or multi-dimensional features are important to investigate as an addition to the sparse archive pertaining to the history of feminism and feminist writing of a certain period in South Africa. Moreover, it was important to me to examine how women reacted after 1948 to the discriminatory gendered and racial policies implemented during apartheid by the National Party. Whereas Smit struggled to claim her authorial voice in the 1930s, Waring seemingly had no trouble asserting her "I" on paper and in the media in the decades that followed.

Apart from the differences regarding historical contexts, personal experience, language and ethnicity, all three women subjects contributed in various ways, as this project shows, to shaping South Africa's literary (and political) landscape, and their writing offers valuable insights into the gender and race politics of the time. Observable in all three women's life writing is the importance of the value attributed to the female body in respective temporalities and spacialities. Therefore, as I explain in detail further on, I examine throughout this project how the embodied (and relational) subjectivities of these three subjects become manifest through their writing. Continuities, for example in how their respective subjectivities where embodied and relationally constituted in their writing, despite the different periods in which they lived and wrote, are addressed throughout. In my view, these continuities in subjectivity formation illustrate a peculiar kind of historical and literary trajectory (a point I return to in the final chapter of the study). However, the expected discontinuities in the conditions of their lives, which markedly shaped their respective subjectivities, and their individual styles of writing are equally important, as my ensuing analyses demonstrate. For example, I discuss Molteno's sexuality and her religious convictions, central features in her writing, but less prominent in the other two subjects' life writing. Of the

[9] Coullie's justification for not including Waring is attributed to the space limitation of her anthology and an inability to obtain permission from the copyright holders (13), which Sarinjeive criticises as "an either-or explanation which is neither here nor there" (105).

three subjects, Smit is the only one to use two different "I"s or 'personas' to write about herself; a self-narrating act particular to her writing. Since Waring employs techniques that merge written and visual elements (such as cartoons and photos) to portray herself in her autobiographical texts, these multidimensional, self-representative features necessarily require attention.

Contextualising the Study: Genres, Definitions and Delineations

It is estimated that the first autobiography in the West, titled *Confessions*, was written in approximately 397 CE by St Augustine (Smith and Watson *Reading* 105). Diaries and letters are even older forms of life writing. In recent centuries, especially as more and more people were educated, various forms of life writing were practised. Now, after the technological boom, over 50%[10] of the world is active on social media sites, practising forms of life writing by uploading selfies with captions, updating their Facebook status or tweeting. However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, letter and journal writing were the order of the day. Though much of what has been written has been lost, some families, friends, archivists, government institutions and document centres have managed to donate, curate, and consequently protect much of these now historical documents. South African archives, like those in other parts of the world, fortunately offer much for prospective researchers, particularly those interested in women's life writing. And, as this dissertation suggests, it is possible to learn a considerable amount about South African female subjectivity, from any given period, by studying archival material and related texts.

To clarify my project and approach, I first define and discuss the field of life writing and the viability of the field for examining subjectivity. Subjectivity, as I approach and examine the concept, is then outlined, followed by a discussion of my interest in white women situated within the (post)colonial era[11] of South African history. I do not, however, define female subjectivity or

[10] I determined this percentage by gathering the latest data on world population numbers and the number of social media users globally and then worked out the percentage of social media users.

[11] To summarise: in the demarcated period of this thesis (1868-1977), South Africa consisted of two British Colonies (the Cape and Natal) and two Boer Republics (the Orange Free State and Transvaal) until the defeat of the Boers in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). In 1910, the two previous Republics and British Colonies, which were four different British Colonies after the war, unified after much negotiation and became a form of constitutional monarchy, a mostly independent, self-governing dominion of Britain (Freund 211). 1910 is thus generally the date provided by historians that marks the end of the colonial period in South Africa and signals the advent of the South African postcolonial period. However, it should be mentioned that Union and later Republic politics were, to an extent, neo-colonial; politicians and political parties strove to cement white rule, which in effect was only possible by oppressing non-white South Africans (Freund 213-124). A new school of thought emerging in South Africa, especially in the wake of

explain my reasons for using this term after I have concluded my theoretical discussion in the following section. Considerable theoretical discussion is required to substantiate my use of the term 'female subjectivity' and I therefore delay my clarification, definition and use of the term.

I frequently employ the term life writing in this thesis and discuss the genres of life writing to refer to the primary texts I analyse. What follows is a broad definition of the concept, drawing on the theorisations of Coullie (6-9), Marlene Kadar (3-12), Laurie McNeill (1-18) and Margaretta Jolly (2001). Life writing is an umbrella term used to describe writing primarily concerned with self-expression. That said, it is usefully versatile and varied. The term encapsulates texts: (a) that are produced by an individual (or *about* an individual, as in the case of biography); (b) that focus on the individual's life, ideas, experiences, perceptions, memories (for example memoir, autobiography, diaries and letters); (c) in which the self is usually the subject of the written text produced; (d) that, alternatively, provide impressions of *others*, political events, that are informed through the subjective lens of their authors; (e) that represent or are a collection of the interests and concerns of an individual (lyrics, praise poetry, autobiographical poetry, cookbooks, scrapbooks, collections of favourite quotations from texts and photo albums with commentary, dates and impressions); (f) that are primarily concerned with self-expression informed by the individual's lived experience; and (g) that consist of different forms or formats. Kadar notes, "life writing is not a fixed term, and [...] is in flux as it moves from considerations of genre to consideration[s] of critical practice" (3).

The underlying assumption on which this project relies is that life writing, while unable to capture an essential self, nevertheless has truth value. Let me consider some debates related to this claim. In his early work on the autobiographical genre (categorised as life writing), Philippe Lejeune hypothesises that to fulfil the "autobiographical pact" between author and reader of the text, the author, narrator, and protagonist of an autobiography have to be identical (23). The pact between reader and writer depends on what the author reveals through narration about the protagonist or subject of the autobiography as 'truth'. In relation to Lejeune, Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson

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recent student uprisings such as #Feesmustfall and #Rhodesmustfall suggests that South Africa only became postcolonial in 1994, after the end of apartheid. However, for the purposes of this thesis, I consider 1910 to mark the end of the colonial and start of the postcolonial period of South African history. I emphasise, though I refer throughout to the colonial and postcolonial period of South African history (and in the title of this dissertation), I do not apply postcolonial theory or a postcolonial lens to my analysis of the three women's life writing. My use of the term postcolonial thus refers to an era, not a theoretical framework.

assert that autobiographers (and by implication life writers) "cannot lie because anything they say, however mendacious, is the truth about themselves, whether they know it or not [...]. Any utterance in an autobiographical text [life writing], even if inaccurate or distorted, is a characterization of its writer" (*Reading* 15). Truth is a precarious concept in autobiography. One can only ever know a subjective truth, tell a story of self from memory, and construct an autobiographical narrative with words and narrative structures available to the author. Smith states:

> The autobiographer is the self-historian, autobiography representation. Purporting to reflect upon or re-create the past through the processes of memory, autobiography is always, multiply, storytelling: memory leaves only a trace of an earlier experience that we adjust into story; experience itself is mediated by the ways we describe and interpret it to others and ourselves; cultural tropes and metaphors which structure autobiographical narrative are themselves fictive; and narrative is driven by its own fictive conventions about beginnings, middles, and ends. Even more fundamentally, the language we use to "capture" memory and experience can never "fix" the "real" experience but only approximate it, yielding up its own surplus of meaning or revealing its own artificial closures. ("Construing Truth in Lying Mouths" 35)

In agreement with other critics, I maintain that misrepresentation, omission, fictionalisation, fabrication or blatant so-called 'lies' are discursive tactics, and that these techniques reveal 'truths' or desires that characterise aspects of an autobiographer's personality and identity. I now apply the same logic to the field of life writing. Although other genres of life writing differ considerably from autobiography, I assume the same 'truth' value to be located in authors' self-expression and self-representation through their "I". This discursive 'truth' written by the author about self, then, reveals subjectivity. The following paragraphs first explain the theoretical concept of subjectivity and I then proceed to explicate why one could utilise the genres of life writing as a lens to discuss female subjectivity. The notion of subjectivity has been widely debated in life writing, philosophy, anthropology, literary theory and other fields of study. No consensus has been reached regarding a fixed definition of the term. *My* working definition is informed by my reading of leading scholars in the field (i.e. see the following section of this chapter). In this study, I also consider the historical variance of the term.

During the Enlightenment, subjectivity as a philosophical concept was considered representative of an essential self, striving towards a consciousness of 'higher thought' isolated from external forces such as institutions, politics or social engagements or influences such as the body (Smith

Subjectivity, Identity, and the Body 5-10). Subjectivity was defined "as opposed to (perhaps present even in spite of) the body" (Cahill *Rethinking Rape* 52). I return to the Cartesian self and mind/body dichotomy further on. Suffice it to say, scholarship on subjectivity over the last two centuries altered Enlightenment definitions of the term: "[t]he current understanding of subjectivity as synonym for inner life processes and affective states is of relatively recent origin" (Biehl, Good and Kleinman 8). Subjectivity in its simplest form refers to an individual's consciousness (drawing here from phenomenology), shaped by the social, political, historical and cultural contexts informing these perceptions and the subject's relation to these phenomena and institutions. Thus, subjectivity is what someone thinks, why someone thinks this, and how they think about particular issues; their "inner life processes". The consciousness of the subject (the what, why and how they think and feel) is influenced by their time, context, culture and society. Subjects are thus produced by time and context-specific societies and who they are is formed in accordance with said society or in opposition to dominant ideologies.

In epistemological terms, what and how a subject believes is coupled with the sources and origin of the subject's knowledge. Thus, what does the subject believe and how did it come to believe what it does? In these terms, a subject is produced by the knowledge that constitutes it. An ontological study of subjectivity would entail an examination of the subject's being, becoming, its existence and its relation to society.[12] It follows that the subject is "the one who collects and organizes the data of personal experience [... that] involves many layers of the mind and diverse modes of expression" (Van Buren 33).

My thesis does not rely on the complexity inherent in philosophical inquiries regarding the concept of subjectivity, even though my understanding of the concept was informed by the field. I regard subjectivity (after much reading) as the unique state of being, thinking, feeling and expression every person possesses that is formed in response to / shaped by its environment, society and context. For the purposes of this thesis, I examine how three subjects utilise their "I"s in their respective life writing to discover how they verbalised in text their experiences, or "their affective states" (Biehl, Good and Kleinman 8), assuming that their subjectivities can be narrated and

[12] This assemblage of certain philosophical modes of inquiry was informed by the critical work of Manfred Frank (193-210), João Biehl, Byron Good & Arthur Kleinman (52-65) Ann Cahill (*Rethinking* 50-69) and Donald Hall (1-26).

transcribed textually for an audience or themselves. My interest is to determine how their subjectivities were shaped by their circumstances and how they responded to situations and environments. Therefore, in my examination of female subjectivity I consider: the subject's consciousness, their awareness of self, their self-conscious negotiation of dominant socio-cultural discourses, and the social structures informing their being and becoming. The women's self-representative, written perceptions of events, themselves and society and the meaning they (un)consciously attach to their self (the body, gender, sexuality, value and experience) are also considered. As interpellated subjects inhabit, are informed by and finally themselves produce cultural meaning, I attribute my primary understanding and mode of analysis vis-à-vis subjectivity to anthropologists. Whereas philosophy explains difficult abstract concepts such as subjectivity, the field of anthropology offers useful practical ways in which to engage, measure and test these concepts in society. According to Biehl, Good and Kleinman, anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz "understand subjective life by analyzing the symbolic forms – words, [writing], images, institutions, behaviors – through which people actually represent themselves to themselves and to one another" (Biehl, Good and Kleinman 7). The symbolic forms through which I examine subjectivity are the written texts by the three women I singled out. As Smith and Watson state in this regard: "Subjects know themselves in language because experience is discursive, embedded in the languages of everyday life and the knowledge produced at everyday sites" (*Reading* 31). Yet, one must remember that "subjects [also] embody culture" (Biehl, Good and Kleinman 7). Consequently, I had access to these women's written texts and therefore rely on these materials to examine subjectivity formation. This thesis illustrates that a close reading of the ways in which these women used, presented and explored their selves on paper is adequate, in part, to extrapolate information about their subjectivities since their experience of themselves was also discursive. By embodying their respective cultures, discursively asserting their subjectivities in their texts, they make known the circumstances that gave rise to the shaping of their unique subjectivities.

The "I" in life writing signals the speaking subject (I refer to the "I" as the 'agentive I' in this thesis) relating her *lived experience* and scripting her subjectivity forming in response to said experience. Joan Scott explains that experience is "a process … by which subjectivity is constructed" (qtd. in Smith and Watson *Reading* 31). Subjectivity is therefore not static, but in flux as more experience shapes the subject in different ways. Smith and Watson further assert: "Experience, then, is the very process through which a person becomes a certain kind of subject

owning certain identities in the social realm, identities constituted through material, cultural, economic, and psychic relations" (*Reading* 31). Agentive, meaning "taking an active role; producing an effect" (English Oxford Living Dictionaries, 2018) in this instance indicates, to me, that the "I" in life writing *produces* subjectivity and is always *active* in and when writing its self. It is through the use of the "I" in life writing I suggest in this thesis that women managed to claim agency or autonomy; through writing they could assert and voice their subjectivities. As the following chapters illustrate, through using the "I" offered by the genres of life writing, these three women voiced, for example, aspects of their subjectivity that formed in opposition to restrictions in their respective societies. Molteno penned her most intimate fears concerning her and her female lovers, Smit wrote using not one, but two different "I"s with their own developed subjectivities, and Waring, with wit and a sharpened pen, critiqued men and the gender discrepancies in her society. But then again, their subjectivities were formed not only in opposition to their respective societies.

Influential French theorist and writer Hélène Cixous, for example, opines that the "I" is/are always multiple "I"s in a similar way that the self is constituted by multiple selves (xv-xxi). She argues that subjectivity is what humans have in common and is thus a "non-closed mix of self/s and others" (xvii). The suggestion is thus that one's "I"s (in plural here) do not exist in isolation but are constituted by others' "I"s. Judith Butler echoes this view in her work *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005). She states that an "I" can only account for itself in the presence of a "you" and that "I" always calls forth "you" (2-40): "the 'I' has no story of its own that is not also the story of a relation – or set of relations – to a set of norms" (8). This "set of norms" (discursively constructed) influenced each of the subjects discussed in this thesis, for example about their perception of race, their bodies, their gender, etc. Adding to this line of thought is Arthur Kleinman and Erin Fitz-Henry, who explain: "Experience, then, has as much to do with collective realities as it does with individual translation and transformation of those realities. It is always simultaneously social and subjective, collective and individual" (53). To examine lived experience as an indicator of subjectivity, it is always necessary to include an analysis of social and collective cultural forces that influence the subject and through which they make sense of their experience and reality (Coullie 7). Thus, if subjectivity is constituted by experience and experience is "simultaneously social and subjective, collective and individual", it makes sense to describe subjectivity as relational. Relationality in terms of subjectivity refers to the wider social networks

and systems through which subjects experience and negotiate said experience that constructs or processes their subjectivity. In this thesis I regard subjectivity as simultaneously constituted by multiple "I"s in the process of negotiating themselves through and by a "you" or "others". I do not regard subjectivity as something that is produced in isolation. In women's writing, especially in the period under discussion, these "I"s were mediated and established through you/others and can noticeably be seen and examined through "relationality" (Smith & Watson *Reading* 248). Relationality, in terms of life writing, refers to the visibility and significance of others in a woman's self-narrative (telling others' stories in her own or telling her own story through the others in it) and the ways in which she establishes her identity and claims her agency through the image of and reference to others. According to Cixous, "[p]ure I, identical to I-self, does not exist. I is always in difference. [...] I is never an individual. I is haunted" (xviii). In my investigation of relationality, I remember that the "the *needing* [of] the other often shows itself as *resenting* the other" (Nealon 7), and hence I closely consider the ways in which these women, for example, depict and write to or about men and women respectively (or people of other races and ethnicities) to determine whether there is a palpable resentment present in their writing. However, relationality or the need for the other in a text does not only manifest as resentment, it can manifest as affection. But, as I argue in Chapter Four, Waring's relational others in terms of a social group were white, but in terms of difference and comparison, black people as a group fulfilled this function. Her resentment, interestingly enough, was projected onto other white people who did not conform to her worldviews; it was not aimed at black ethnic groups.

Returning to the Enlightenment view of subjectivity, with its emphasis on and construction of mind/body, disembodied/embodied and rational/irrational dichotomies, it is necessary to mention that this view has altered significantly in recent decades. I first reflect on this history before continuing with my discussion of the genres of life writing. Woman during the Enlightenment was 'naturally' regarded as an embodied and irrational subject, or in Simone de Beauvoir's terms, woman was "Other/Object" to the universal masculine "I"'s "Self/Subject" position (Conboy, Medina and Stanbury 2). As Ann Cahill points out, the original definition and understanding of subjectivity as in the Enlightenment relied on the subjection of women to "absorb, embody, and satisfy material human needs demanded by the fact of embodiment so that the (male) intellect might fulfil its project" (52) of mental and spiritual enlightenment, distanced from somatic, bodily and material shackles the Enlightenment philosophers denigrated. Key ideas informing my own

understanding and use of the term embodied subjectivity (to which I return further on in my theoretical discussion) draw from such debates and the developments in the epistemic understanding of subjectivity, especially post-structuralist and feminist revisions pertaining to the theorisation and critique of 'subjectivity'. However, at this juncture it is necessary to mention that life writing, especially women's autobiography, has been central to challenging the Cartesian notion of subjectivity. Linda Anderson writes:

> There remains, therefore, if our emphasis shifts to the future, a *political* imperative for women to constitute themselves as subjects if they are to escape being never-endingly determined as objects. This need not mean returning to the same (masculine) subjectivity which saw itself as unitary and complete, simply expanding it to include women within its definition, but rather imagine multiple subjectivities, which are without foundation but located, instead, in particular times and places. Within this project, autobiography has an important role. (90)

Women's autobiography and women's life writing (and other writing from marginal communities) increasingly challenged the veracity of the Cartesian subject in the twentieth century. I return to my understanding of women's embodied subjectivity further on and then provide a full definition of my concept of 'female subjectivity'. In the following paragraphs I discuss the sub-genres of life writing the women I examine mostly practised, namely: autobiography (or in Waring's case, a hybrid form thereof), letters, journals and/or diaries. However, I first discuss the genre of autobiography because much of the theoretical concepts I rely on are located in autobiographical theory and its critical historiography. Although these women also utilised other genres of life writing, I discuss those genres in following chapters where applicable. These genres include the autobiographical poetry of Molteno, the autobiographical fiction of Smit and the autobiographical texts of Waring. I further rely on life writing produced by others close to Molteno and Smit to shed light on their respective subjectivity formations by examining how they were perceived by others.

Until approximately 1980 autobiographies were mostly ignored or regarded with scepticism by literary critics who thought the genre "subliterary" (Brownley and Kimmich xi). The rationale underscoring this dismissive attitude was the belief that autobiographical writing required less skill and finesse than writing novels or poetry *because* it drew from personal experience (Brownley and Kimmich xi). This view has shifted markedly. Scholars now consider the reliance on personal experience as a strength in narratology, the ability to convey the self and 'I' using various literary techniques as a skill, and now think the genre worthy of literary inquiry. The memoir boom of the

past few decades has now elevated autobiography and other life narratives to the level of a "prized commodity": the public wants to read 'true' stories (Smith and Watson *Reading* 127). Currently, according to some publishers, "the readership of the novel [is] fast declining, [but] the readership for non-fiction and real life stories [is] rapidly growing" (Krog "I, me, me, mine!" 100). It appears that both the reading public and academics progressively consider life writing / autobiography as a genre worthy of reading and investigating. This phenomenon might be attributed to various factors which I will not discuss in this thesis but that are of note for scholars of life writing and significant for the field.

Female scholars such as Smith and Watson (1992, 1998 & 2010), Gita Rajan (1992), Nancy L. Paxton (1992), Anderson (2001) and Suzanne Chester (1992) have written extensively about the masculine history of the autobiographical genre. According to these critics, in the autobiographical genre the autobiographical 'I' was historically male, Western and middle-class, or a "unique individual rather than a member of a collectivity" (Smith and Watson *De/Colonising the Subject* xvii). Contemporarily, those who write autobiography have changed and with this occurrence a multiplicity of new genres and sub-genres of autobiography has emerged as new voices forged modes of self-expression to encompass and illuminate a particular self of people of every age, gender, ethnicity, community, culture and sex. To quote Lejeune's more traditional definition of the genre, "[autobiography is a] [r]etrospective prose narrative written by a real person concerning [her] own existence, where the focus is [her] individual life, in particular the story of [her] personality" (4). As contemporary life writing scholars, we now regard the genre as more complex than this definition allows. As is evidenced by Smith and Watson's detailed explanation of the development of the genre in the second edition of *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2010), there are many new definitions of the genre, new sub-genres and many more modes of narrating the self that have occurred or been defined in recent years by writers and scholars alike. For example, Waring's autobiographical texts vary in form, content, style and compilation from what would traditionally have been termed an autobiography. However, I discuss the form and content of her autobiographical texts in detail in Chapter Four and do not address questions of genre at this stage. But to clarify, for this research project I regard autobiography as a "self-reflexive, a self-critical act" (Olney 25) of writing the 'I' and the self. I regard autobiography as a genre of literature that traces and maps the history and becoming of the

author of the text's 'I', as understood and written by the author herself where she reflects on her life and the circumstances that shaped her subjectivity.

Returning to women's autobiographical practices, Carolyn G. Heilbrun explains: "women's self-writings were, until very recently, radically different from men's, and if the contemplation of one's own singularity is critical, scarcely deserve the name of autobiography, but […]in the last decade [70s] women's autobiography has unmistakably found its true form" (16). Heilbrun writes this argument in conversation with Georges Gusdorf, who asserted that *men*, historically, from Saint Augustine (whose *Confessions* is regarded as the first autobiography, as mentioned earlier) onwards wrote the stories of their lives because they believed their "existence [to be] significant" (Gusdorf 29); that their death would leave the world "incomplete" (29). Heilbrun also critiques the renowned life writing scholar James Olney's theoretical approach to life writing. Olney "took the maleness of autobiography for granted" (17), she notes. He was interested in why men wrote autobiographies and opined that autobiography exhibited "the nature of our own selves and our share in the human condition" (Olney qtd. in Heilbrun 17). To this, Heilbrun has the following to say, "it did not occur to him that half the human race did not share, in the way he described, 'the human condition'" (17). Women historically, according to Heilbrun, had few options to assert their subjectivity and singularity in writing. Religious women usually wrote dialogues they had with God, proving their virtue and piety, and secular women's stories almost inevitably ended in "marriage or death" (17). Furthermore, Heilbrun states that because women lacked a sympathetic audience or community of readers, they and their writing became the 'other' to men's autobiographical writing. The argument Heilbrun proposes is that for female autobiographers, "[i]dentity is grounded through relation to the chosen other" (19). What Heilbrun refers to in her paper is relationality, but the concept was not yet coined or in use when she made these arguments. The notion of relationality is now commonplace and widely utilised in life writing scholarship. She further states:

> The claim of achievement, the admission of ambition, the recognition that accomplishment was neither luck nor the result of efforts or generosity of others, all continued, well into the twentieth century, to be impossible for women to admit to in their autobiographical narratives. (Heilbrun 19)

Autobiography is a genre written with an audience in mind. It is published for a public to read and although a genre primarily concerned with a private life, it is penned for public consumption. Thus,

it is not as private as other life writing genres. Is it therefore possible that women could, without as much difficulty, claim achievement in their letters or journals? Hypothetically, yes. But: my examination of Molteno's and Smit's writing does not support this hypothesis. Molteno voices no ambition to "claim achievement" in her letters or journals, although she 'achieved' a considerable amount in public life. Smit too experienced considerable difficulty in claiming authorship of her texts. My project illustrates that Waring, utilising an ensemble, hybrid form of the autobiographical genre, had less trouble than the other two subjects to detail her public achievements. Despite the racist and sexist restrictions imposed by the political landscape during the latter decades of twentieth-century South Africa, white women nevertheless were afforded more freedom to publicly express their views in fiction and non-fiction.

Jolly astutely observes that "[m]any [scholars] come to letters through an interest in autobiography" (Jolly in Jolly and Stanley 91), an apt observation in my case. My interest in life writing originated in my study of women's autobiography; it has since shifted to include unpublished letters and diaries located in archives. Letter-writing is a familiar form of writing practised daily by most literate people (consider, for instance, the email form). Letter-writing as a genre though is more complicated to define, as McNeill (x), Jolly (in Jolly and Stanley 91) and Liz Stanley ("The Epistolary Gift" 135-136) indicate. Nevertheless, critics argue that letters do however have some distinctive or identifiable characteristics. For example, letters are intended to be reciprocal and exchanged. In this form of communication and self-expression, there is usually an author who becomes a signatory who sends the letter to an addressee, with the expectation that the letter will be answered, and that the signatory might receive a letter in return (Stanley "The Epistolary Gift" 135-136). A letter is penned with a goal; therefore, business letters are not the same as letters written to friends, family and lovers. Letters are (primarily) private when addressed to friends and family. They are intended for the addressee and mostly written with the "you" of the addressee in mind. Historically and contemporarily, letters can or will be read to a wider audience such as members of a family if they impart general information the signatory wishes to share. Some letters, on the other hand, are meant for publication, such as those sent to newspapers and magazines. As has already become evident from the above descriptions and general observations, the categorisation of letters as a genre is becoming "murky". To this point, McNeill notes: "As critical attention has extended to the murky territory of the 'autobiographical,' we recognize texts exceed the limits of 'genre' to encompass or explain life writing". Jolly and Stanley

suggest this possibility in their analysis of the letter, a form so capacious that it resists categorization (McNeill x). I examine the letters penned by Molteno and her acquaintances in Chapter Two but I include a more detailed theoretical discussion of letters in Chapter Three of this thesis where I explore Smit's 'artistic' and creative letters. Most of the letters I engage with in this dissertation were private and meant only for the addressee, which raises key questions concerning the ethics of archival and life writing research. I ask at this juncture: should we read and then reproduce in our analyses others' private writing, even if their letters were donated by their family and friends to public archives? Can I ethically engage another's life and "I", and should I? I return to these questions in the final section of this chapter.

To answer the question concerning the ethics of conducting life writing research in the latter part of this chapter, it is important to consider other genres of life writing practised by the selected subjects, such as diaries and/or journals, for instance. Diary writing could be called one of the most private and intimate life writing practices since it is usually (bar some exceptions) written with no audience in mind. Thus, the content is only intended for the 'eye' of the authors themselves (Ketelle 34). The style employed to write a diary typically varies from other life writing genres because diaries are usually a record-keeping device; written to note the day's or past days' events (Ketelle 34). For example, Molteno used her journals when she was younger to record her chronic headaches, her household chores, her social duties and activities, and which book she read privately or aloud to her father. However, the content of her prayer journals varies significantly. In these, she addressed God and noted her apparent failings, sins and desires. Diaries can contain entries that cover topics from the exceptional to the very mundane and ordinary. Smith and Watson explain that part of "the immediacy of the genre derives from the diarist's lack of foreknowledge" (*Reading* 266). There is debate among scholars whether a difference exists between journals and diaries. Lejeune does not distinguish between the two genres, although Smith and Watson note that other scholars do and regard the journal as a more public record-keeping form, less private than the diary (*Reading* 266). I refer to Molteno's journals as journals not for a theoretical reason but because the archivist who organised the Molteno-Murray collection, Dr Immelman, labelled and chronologically numbered these particular texts as journals, not diaries. Diane Ketelle mentions, in reference to Lejeune, that "[d]iaries are not literary documents, even though they can have aesthetic merit and are documents of life process rather than finished narratives about a life. As such, diaries are only a part of what a life means" (34). Keeping in mind that scholars can never

fully recover another's life from the documents they study and that diaries, for example, are not "finished narratives", it is still possible to examine a subject's life writing for the partial glimpses offered in her texts, revealing her personality and experiences. Therefore, the afore-mentioned autobiographical forms, though not able to represent *in full* the complexity of subjects or detail all the conditions that gave rise to their subjectivity formation, remain worthy of *investigation.*

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

Structurally, included in each of the following chapters are: my analysis of selected aspects of each author's life writing; a brief biographical sketch outlining the life of each subject; a historical overview to provide contextual information regarding the socio-political and geo-cultural elements that significantly influenced the formation of each subject's subjectivity; the theoretical concepts, approaches and sources I relied on for the analyses, not noted in this introductory chapter; and a literature review of studies conducted on the (life) writing of each subject, as well as a literature review of other studies conducted in the areas I examine relevant to the subject's writing.

In this section of the introductory chapter, the literature review is therefore not exhaustive but intends to offer insights into the most significant critical studies and key observations made in relation to the field of South African women's life writing. According to my estimation, the defining factors all three women subjects had in common were their embodied subjectivity and the way their subjectivity formed relationally. Therefore, I detail my understanding of embodied and relational subjectivity in the following theoretical overview. Given the uniqueness of each subject's subjectivity, I found it necessary to examine not only the continuities that link their writing, but what emerged as characteristic, or, elements of each of the three women's writing central to the formation of their respective subjectivities. I provide detailed outlines of my reading (and the theory informing said reading) of their work in the respective chapters and thus limit the following discussion to the theory concerning embodied and relational subjectivity that underscores the analyses of all three chapters.

Since this project concerns white women's life writing, I turn to Coullie's *The Closest of Strangers: South African Women's Life Writing* (2001) to clarify my focus, and to address concerns this research might evoke. This valuable resource includes extracts from the life narratives of numerous women who lived in twentieth-century South Africa; subjects from diverse racial, ethnic

and class backgrounds. Coullie makes a few observations that are also central to this thesis, which I recall here. Firstly, given the "considerable benefits that accrued to all whites as a result of institutionalised racism" (5), Coullie states that one would expect white women's life writing to have at least expressed racist sentiments or their approval of an ideological system which benefitted them, and yet, the women's texts she studied did neither of the above. Coullie argues that the reason for this apparent absence of racial awareness in white women's life writing in South Africa might be an effect that illustrates apartheid or racial segregation "worked extraordinarily well to normalise what was grossly abnormal" (5). She further notes: "Also worth commenting on is the large number of autobiographical accounts by white women that fail to demonstrate any real antipathy to racism, or even to document it as a defining feature of their social context" (5). The writings of the chosen three subjects of this study speak to the above statement in divergent ways: Molteno, in the early twentieth century, did address racism in her society, both in her writing and in her public conduct. Smit seems to conform to Coullie's description. At least, in my scrutiny of her writing, I could not trace any comments about race. Waring's writing, however, entirely nestles on the opposite extreme (to Smit's). She is the only white woman in this study, fleetingly mentioned by Coullie, who explicitly supported white supremacy and endorsed apartheid in autobiographical texts (5).

Other important studies in the field of life writing and women's writing include Daymond and Andries Visagie's "Confession and Autobiography", which provides a detailed overview of autobiographical practice and its history in South Africa from white settlement in 1652 to the most recent post-apartheid confessions published in both Afrikaans and English. Valerie Letcher compiled an important bibliography of white women's writing from 1800-1940. Although not specifically about women's life writing, the bibliography includes collections of letters and autobiographies published by women. Elizabeth van Heyningen (1999 & 2013), among others, has conducted considerable research on women's diaries and autobiographies produced during the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902); I engage more extensively with these criticisms in Chapter Three.

I draw on the following theoretical fields, subsequently discussed, to construct a theoretical approach to this dissertation: life writing, gender studies, literary studies and philosophy. Underpinning and propelling the gender inquiry of this project is *feminist* historiography. Historiography, or the study of history writing itself, analysing the ways in which history is or was

written, discussing the topics studied or neglected (such as women's history and narratives discussed in this thesis), has developed significantly since New Historicism's interpretative approaches to 'writing' history and has been heavily influenced by feminist and postcolonial studies (Marias 62-66). Historiography intersects with the analysis of life writings since both these methods of critical engagement examine written or recorded histories (Kearns 110-131).

In *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (1994), Rosi Braidotti states: "The speaking 'I' [subject,] is not neutral or gender-free, but sexed" (186). She extrapolates from this statement to clarify that the sexed speaking 'I', asserting through enunciation "('I', woman, think and therefore I say that I, woman, am)" that their womanhood or femaleness is not "deterministic" (186) or prescriptive; neither does it relate to a predetermined "essence" (186) of being or personhood. How the 'I' is sexed though in discourse and society, *is* determined by biological sex and is marked by the socio-economic and political history of that sex. Subjectivity, as spoken and established through the subject and written 'I', is embedded within the body and thus carries the gendered history of its sexed 'I'. Similarly, autobiography, a form of life writing, Gilmore argues, "is positioned within discourses that construct truth, identity and power, and these discourses produce a gendered subject" (xvi). The speaking subject 'I' and self-represented written subject 'I' in discourse and society is thus always sexed and gendered. Cahill lists the following challenges feminists encounter while working with theories combining subjectivity and the body:

> How does one account for sexually differentiated bodies without reducing women to their bodies (essentialism) or rendering impossible a commonality among women (relativism)? How does one account for subjectivity in such a way as to avoid the dualistic, hierarchical thinking that has traditionally excluded women from agency, and that concomitantly degrades the bodily in favor of the intellectual or the cultural? If traditional definitions and expressions of subjectivity deny both the possibility of women's agency and the significance of sexed bodies, how will a theory of subjectivity that includes women's experiences and specificities differ? [...] In short, how are we to understand the embodied, sexed, sexual subject? (*Rethinking Rape* 69-70)

For the purposes of this research project, I do not propose or presume to construct a grand theory addressing Cahill's queries and difficulties, but I do address some of these theoretical questions in the course of my analysis of the selected women's life writing. I try throughout to understand the

"embodied, sexed, sexual subject". However, my specific focus in the following three chapters is mostly on the relational and embodied subject.

Elizabeth Grosz proposes in *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (1994) that "subjectivity can be thought, in its richness and diversity, in terms quite other than those implied by various dualisms" (*viii*). She challenges the Cartesian binary that separates body and mind, and in effect, the implicit symbolic preferences of mind over body (as well as man over woman, culture over nature). Historically, the biological sex or 'colour' of a body determined a subject's given political, social and cultural position in society. Feminist and postcolonial critics oppose this essentialist (political, normative and discriminatory) ordering of 'bodies' and certain studies/criticisms ignore or resist the body as central to (or placed in a "[peripheral]" (Grosz *ix*) position to) the study of subjectivity. Grosz states: "Bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively. They act and react. They generate what is new, surprising, unpredictable" (*xi*). The mind/body, culture/nature binaries that extend the positioning of woman on the side of body and nature have strengthened since the Enlightenment in Western thought although it has been subjected to ruthless criticism in recent decades. A mobile, centripetal and centrifugal focus on the body, from the inside outwards and from the outside inwards, is fundamental to Grosz's proposition in order to reposition the body and thus rethink current understandings of subjectivity. She suggests reconfiguring subjectivity as something inherently embodied: a subject's somatic experience of its body, its bounded corporeality, has a profound influence on its subjectivity and vice versa. If this notion could be accepted into our understanding and theorisation of subjectivity, it could potentially jettison other historical and gendered conceptions of subjectivity. The work of Grosz and other theorists has indeed had a marked influence on other scholars since its publication roughly three decades ago (I return to this point in the following paragraph). In a recent special issue on embodiment compiled by the international *a/b: Auto/Biography Studies* journal, Kruger and DasGupta state "[t]hat indeed, all autobiographies, whether centering the body as subject or not, whether told through sociologically normative or nonnormative bodies, are necessarily told through their subjects' bodies and lives" (483-484). They further assert that "[e]mbodiment in autobiography studies must mean recognizing that there is no such thing as a "nonembodied" memoir" (486). Thus, within two to three decades scholars have come to reject the possibility that subjectivity can be disembodied and now assert that autobiographical practice *cannot* be disembodied. However, the subjects selected for this study lived in the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries, their contexts differed, and the formation of their subjectivities was specific to their time. I therefore further discuss the theorists that contributed to the development of the field of female subjectivity and notions of embodied subjectivity.

Cahill observes, as mentioned above, that there has been a shift in feminist criticism and philosophy towards understanding the body as central to subjectivity, identity and experience (*Overcoming Objectification* viii-xi). Furthermore, she proposes that in place of the disembodied self, contemporary scholars moved towards understanding "a self marked by its own materiality, a self always and already embedded in a web of contexts and relationships. The body, as the site of difference and intersection, has been recognized as central to the processes of becoming that mark human subjects" (viii). Thus, the subject, its experience of life and others, is always a relational endeavour and process (23). The study of embodied and relational subjectivity forms the basis of my theoretical framework, inquiries and subsequent analyses. I indicate in following chapters how the three women's respective subjectivities were formed in response to relational others and their experience of their physical bodies (and its meaning in society).

In terms of the relational and embodied subject, Braidotti ponders the "viable political option" (129) that the embodied subject, termed by the signifier "woman", presents if investigated and (re)examined as intersubjective. She suggests examining the "embodied subject in a network of interrelated variables of which 'sexuality' is one, but [to] set [it] alongside other powerful axes of subjectification, such as race, culture, nationality, class, lifestyle preferences etc." (129). To investigate hodological intersections (and the tangential relationship) among such variables when examining the selected subjects, I consider the subject's subjectification and then the formation of its subjectivity in response to various axes and paths. For example, in my discussion of Molteno's sexuality, I simultaneously consider the historical, familial, relational, political, social and economic discourses and ideologies that further informed her notion of her sexuality, *and then* I examine how she responded to these 'triggers' or subjectification to determine her constituted subjectivity. Subjectivity is in flux: thus, her subjectivity already influences how she reacts to her society and different situations. Subjectivity is not simply something that forms, it simultaneously informs. Therefore, in my understanding subjectivity can be *deployed* textually to assert an author's "I".

Butler posits that the 'I' accounting for itself becomes a "social theorist" (*Giving* 8) in the act of writing the self. If the subjects selected for this study theorise their social position and (place in) society, as I suggest they do, it stands to reason that they simultaneously unsettle and even critique this position through explaining their 'I', the meaning of their culturally specific body, their race, ethnicity, nationality and so forth. Flowing from this, it is important therefore to conduct a close reading of the three women's texts, and examine, for example, the form, the content, tone employed, metaphors used, style and the choice of language, in relation to a larger social framework. Jane van Buren suggests:

> women's subjectivity and speech are deeply affected by a chain of signifiers buried in the unconscious that attempt to disguise, avoid, and to mend the holes in the skin by attributing the fear of the hole to women and the designation of wholeness to men. (33)

According to Van Buren, women historically perceived themselves, and were perceived, as somehow incomplete or lacking and attempted to cover these "holes in the sense of being […with] a skin of words, practices, rituals, and creative endeavors" (32). Yet, language signifiers that operate within the subconscious and are used in articulation "to draw circles around the abyss of nothingness" (32) remain fraught with the prevalent power discourses inherent in society and speech. There are various instances in my examination of the three women's life writing where I had to 'read behind' their writing to find what they omitted or had to interrogate the language used to understand what and why they were expressing certain opinions. For example, it would have been impossible to make sense of Smit's apprehensions pertaining to authorship if I did not examine her utterances against the backdrop of the gendered nature of Afrikaner nationalism. She unconsciously gendered authors and even nature (wind, for example) as male whereas the nouns are gender neutral in Afrikaans. But, I illustrate through my analysis of the women's life writing, that in the act of writing (accounting for self), thus, becoming a "social theorist", they simultaneously become aware of gender-related fallacies implicit in their respective societies. Furthermore, they at times come to realise, through the act of writing, their own subjectification by societal discourses, and end up critiquing these subconscious 'fears' and 'holes' attributed to women in their societies.

In conversation with Grosz and Braidotti, Sidonie Smith posits that women were necessarily embodied, in contrast to the (white) universal masculine disembodied 'I', in their autobiographies

in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. She claims: "[T]he autobiographical subject carries a history of the body with her as she negotiates the autobiographical "I," for autobiographical practice is one of those cultural occasions when the history of the body intersects the deployment of subjectivity" (*Subjectivity* 14). Smith makes this statement in relation to the ways in which women could write themselves, their "I" and the self-representative means available to them in writing practice. Smith posits that they could not shed their body and its social and historical significance in their autobiographical texts and therefore these authors' gendered bodies were deployed through their pens in their texts. In agreement with Kruger and DasGupta, I do not consider life writers' documents disembodied, but my interest in this study is to examine not *if* these female subjects were embodied in their writing, but *how* their embodiment manifested in their texts and what this reveals about their subjectivity and in relation thereto, their respective societies. Furthermore, considering the body as central to my understanding of subjectivity and then examining the relational deployment of subjectivity in my reading of the subject's racial subjectivity, is useful. Waring's perception of her white body, for example, in comparison to other bodies make for an interesting discussion in Chapter Four.

Up until this point I have simply referred to and discussed subjectivity as a concept. However, as the title of this thesis claims, I discuss female subjectivity. My use of 'female subjectivity' instead of 'subjectivity' as term in this thesis seems counter-intuitive because it automatically, yet again, genders subjectivity. But, subjectivity, male or female, is, and always has been, gendered. Yet, gender as category was used by the respective societies in which these women lived to suggest them as inferior, a subjection they contested (or at least tried to) in their lives and through their writing. My investigation indicates that the selected women's respective subjectivities were noticeably influenced by their gender, their biological bodies, society's perception of their sex, their perceptions of themselves and other situational, contextual and historical elements. In this study I use 'female subjectivity' instead of 'subjectivity' to signal how, historically, a category of subject (biologically woman) was shaped, formed and constituted in response to the society, context and time in which they lived, and how they in turn shaped those societies.

Methods and Ethics

As primary analytical tool, I conduct a close reading of the texts written by the three women selected for this research project. A close reading of their texts, for example, entails a careful

examination of the tone, style, content (what they choose to write about), metaphors used, or the parlance employed. Such close scrutiny is of paramount importance to the interpretation, especially since I suggest, *how* they wrote and *what* they wrote about reveal to a certain degree *who* they were, *how* they experienced their societies, and *what* they thought. For example, in Waring's autobiographical texts, the narrating "I" expressed many opinions in an unselfconscious, forthright manner in an authoritative tone, and yet, the narrated "I" throughout the narratives is portrayed as rather ignorant and fearful of the unknown. I discuss and define the narrating "I" and narrated "I" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 72-73) in Chapter Four.

I next briefly outline some research methods I used, the ethical considerations of conducting archival research, and clarify some of my approaches. The English Department of Stellenbosch University requires doctoral candidates to use the MLA 7th edition as reference system. However, although MLA guidebooks do provide ways of citing archival materials, the in-text referencing for these sources (at least in the case of this thesis) was extremely cumbersome. The in-text references for the archival materials were too long and thus hindered the readability of the thesis. On these occasions, I utilised a derivative form of the Chicago method of citation developed by the History Department of Stellenbosch University to cite my sources in-text. This method eased the reading of the thesis. However, after citing all my sources using the footnote system of the Chicago referencing system, again the method used caused problems with readability because too much space on the pages was lost to referencing. Therefore, I decided, for the purpose of this thesis, to optimise readability and to organise sources by means of two referencing systems. All the archival sources are cited using the Stellenbosch University Chicago method of referencing, and all the published materials are cited using the MLA (7th edition) referencing system. I tested various other methods and referencing systems, and none was as effective in offering solutions as my chosen method of citation. I have researched other methods employed by scholars but have dismissed their approaches as they offered no viable options to follow. Some scholars opted to simply refer to the archival collections and their locations in an introductory chapter and then offered no further specific information about individual documents located in those collections. It is therefore impossible to visit the archive in question and access a specific document because it was never fully referenced in the scholars' work. This method would be ineffective (although it solves the difficulty of citation) because readers would be unable to find pertinent information relating to the author or the type of document (when was it written, who wrote it, was it a letter or a diary entry,

was it sent to someone, etc.). Many archives assign a document number to every individual document with the express purpose of easing citation for researchers. My entries are complete, the entries describe the type of document (where relevant) and provide all available information. Because I use the Chicago reference system and not for example Harvard or MLA, the information is contained in a footnote in the bottom margin of the same page where I refer to a specific document and is thus easy to access immediately.

I have not been trained as a historian or archivist. Initially, this hindered my research and complicated my methods. However, in time, I found research tools that eased my difficulties. I discovered online the National Archives of South Africa website which links all the search engines and online repositories of national archives. It therefore became much easier to locate archival materials on the three selected women. Although I was able to access useful archival materials on Molteno and Smit, the only archival material I could locate regarding Joyce Waring was an edited copy of one of her autobiographical texts, *Sticks and Stones*, which is in possession of the Archive of Contemporary Affairs at the University of the Free State. Unfortunately, this document was not of much use to me and I do not refer to it in Chapter Four. However, it would have been possible to excavate Waring's writings in newspapers from the 1950-1980s since she was a regular contributor in her capacity as journalist, but I chose not to follow this route. My interest in Waring's writing is focused on her three published autobiographical texts.

My method for gathering relevant archival material for my chapters developed organically as I did not have a clear plan when I started out. I could take photographs of archival materials, but was not allowed to make photocopies, so I photographed the handwritten journals, letters, poetry and other materials on camera. I also photographed newspaper clippings and other relevant materials sourced from the collections in archives and document centres. I then proceeded to read these documents on my laptop, made notes where relevant, and then transcribed digitally what I thought important or simply intriguing. I have transcribed (digitally) roughly 60 typed pages (for each subject) containing extracts from their diaries, letters, poetry, etc. Furthermore, I made notes of other relevant information so that I could easily locate sections of their writing I have not yet transcribed if the need presented itself.

Convention dictates that literary analysis be written in the present tense. However, given that these women *lived* and *wrote* many years ago, I frequently refer to their writing, contextual evidence

and biographical information in the past tense. At first, I followed the required method of analysing their writing in present tense, but in conjunction with the regular references to contextual, biographical and historical events which necessitates the use of past tense, the regular switching between tenses in the paragraphs became confusing. To assist readability and to aid clarity, I therefore started analysing their writing in past tense, which then significantly improved readability. Even though I analyse the selected women's life writing in past tense in this dissertation, *my* analysis of their writing and its revelation about subjectivity formation, my general discussion of their work, for example, is written in present tense.

Gathering archival materials from relevant public institutions was integral to this dissertation. Even though the research conducted, and materials used for this dissertation do not require ethical clearance by current Stellenbosch University Arts and Social Science Faculty frameworks and guidelines, reflection on the ethics of undertaking life writing research is called for. There are parts of Molteno's and Smit's life writing that are thought-provoking, rather sensationalist, and the content titillating to read, but I chose not to include extracts from these materials in my discussion or analyses of their texts. Ethical considerations guided my decisions. I regularly asked myself throughout this research process: how would I feel if someone read my diaries and letters without asking me, and then, how would I feel about the way they are representing me in their writing? I have corresponded with Hettie Smit's son, Schalk van Vuuren, throughout the duration of my dissertation. My correspondence with Van Vuuren served as a constant, subtle, yet soothing and encouraging reminder that these women *lived*. To some, they still *matter* and are *loved*. Life writing is not fiction (even though it shares similar writing techniques and methods in terms of writing an "I" or representing a character). Autobiographies are published with the consent of the author, but letters and diaries are often donated by family members and acquaintances and not by authors themselves, as is the case with the materials I examine. But examining these documents, seeing the handwriting, familiarising myself with the person and character who wrote the letters or diaries, constantly prompted me to acknowledge the *human* involved in the production of the document. I do not know whether these women would have consented to this study and I need to at least ethically engage their life writing. In "The Ethics of Archival Research" Heidi McKee and James Porter assert: "[t]hose papers are also people. Whether the archive is a well-organized, curated collection or merely a jumble of papers, the people and the communities it represents are embodied

as a living presence in the materials […] – and that embodiment raises significant ethical questions for archival researchers" (60).

To evoke the three women's materiality and remind readers of the "living presence in the materials" (McKee and Porter 60) studied here, I opted to include visual material produced by or about these women. Each chapter for example contains photographs of the life writers to visually represent the embodied subject's physicality. Integral to my discussion of these women's writing is their somatic experiences and how their biological bodies constituted their respective subjectivities. As Stanley reminds scholars: "A 'voice' that speaks through representation in photographs is gendered as well as raced, classed; and 'seers' of these representations are also gendered, raced and classed beings. Photographs of auto/biographic subjects and our readings of them are importantly involved in constructing characters biographies, lives-with-meaning" (*The auto/biographical I* 20). I do not analyse these photographic representations of the selected life writers but include them for readers to 'see' or 'read', serving as reminder that these women inhabited *living* cultural, classed and sexed *bodies*. Moreover, I use samples of Molteno's and Smit's life writing to prompt readers to remember, by visually showing their handwriting, that "those papers are also people" (McKee and Porter 60). Waring employed cartoons as a textual form of visual presentation. This representative strategy is discussed at length in Chapter Four and I therefore include a number of visuals, reproduced from her autobiographical texts, in this chapter to comment on in analysis. Where relevant, other visual materials are included to illustrate aspects of these women's lives, their self-representation, their archive, or to clarify my explanations of their texts. These include: an image of how Molteno's bound her poetry, Catherine Corder's notes made in relation to Molteno's prayer journals, and three portraits and a still life painting of red-hot poker flowers painted by Smit.

Finally, I return to some final comments on the ethics of conducting life writing research. Afrikaans literary critic Helize van Vuuren compared two selected quotations from the autobiographies of two renowned South African authors to indicate similarities between their life writing; I regard these quotations as relevant to a discussion about the ethics of life writing and representation. The recently deceased Karel Schoeman asked: "As ek hierdie dinge nie opteken nie, sal iemand anders dit doen?" (Schoeman 131 qtd. in van Vuuren 102). Translated, this reads: "If I don't document these things, will someone else do it?" And the protagonist John asks in J.M.

Coetzee's *Boyhood*: "And if he does not remember them, who will?" (Coetzee 166 qtd. in van Vuuren 102). Coetzee's and Schoeman's questions echo my own ethical considerations as scholar and archivist of my own particular 'special collection'. In the process of conducting this research – investing time, energy and emotions to read and understand the lives of my subjects – I started to feel responsible for the knowledge I gathered about the lives and writing of the subjects I collected. And I asked myself, if I do not write about these women, who will, and how will they do it? Someone must critically engage their life writing because, above all, I maintain that these women's lives and life writings are *worth* remembering. This inevitably leads back to the question (and answer): why not me?

I have explained the aims of my research, provided the rationale for undertaking this study, clarified my motivation for conducting this research and have described the methods I employed. Furthermore, I included a cursory theoretical discussion of ideas that inform my understanding of embodied and relational subjectivity. In the following chapter I examine the life writing of Cape liberal Betty Molteno.

Chapter Two

The "Cosmic Mother": Lesbianism, Religion and Politics in Betty Molteno's Life Writing

Figure 1: Studio portrait of Betty Molteno, aged 18

In "Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the History of the British Cape Colony and Its Frontier Zones, c. 1806-70" (1996), Helen Bradford explains that women were not rendered invisible or silenced in most of the texts written/produced in the nineteenth century (by white men and women respectively). She argues that the invisibility or exclusion of women (of all races) in

imperial and South African historiography should largely be attributed to scholars' androcentric interpretations of the preceding seven decades of history (1920-1990). These historians relied on their own understanding of gender stereotypes as shaped by their respective societies' gender constructions, and somehow wiped nineteenth-century women from their histories. Even though the "colonial state was a male state: in its social base, personnel, and, not least, its military preoccupations and gender discriminatory laws" (355), Bradford explains (with reference to primary sources) that despite the masculine structure of society in the Cape Colony, many Victorian men in the Colony afforded women visibility in their texts and afforded them spaces in which to express their thoughts and opinions (369). Apparently, many Victorian men in the Cape Colony were more "modern" (369) than their historian brothers of the twentieth century, predominantly white and male, in their treatment of women (369). In this chapter, I aim to address, in part, this exclusion of women in South African historiography by examining the life writing of a mostly unacknowledged nineteenth-century subject from the Cape Colony, Elizabeth Maria (Betty) Molteno (24 Sept 1852 – 25 Aug 1927). As this chapter shows, she played a part in many significant historical events in South Africa but was not mentioned in history books. Jane van Buren reminds readers that the "concept of a woman subject is barely known to us […]. This concept as realisation has been buried, encrypted, split, disguised, distorted and aborted through centuries of symbolic culture" (8). To a degree, my endeavour in this chapter is to illustrate that women's life writing, in this case Molteno's writing, counters dominant perceptions of the time that denied women's subjectivity or even the possibility of its existence. Thus, by exploring how Molteno's experiences where narrated through her life writing, reflecting on the formation of her subjectivity, the complexities of female subjectivity as detailed in her writing, one necessarily recovers aspects of the female subject which androcentric society and male dominated historiography "buried, encrypted, split", etc. I examine the following archival materials: her personal documents such as letters, diaries, journals and autobiographical poetry. I further cite documents that bring additional insights to an interpretation of Molteno's life writing and subjectivity such as the private documents penned by her sister Caroline, Pastor/Clergyman C.F. Andrews, and her lover Alice Greene. My examination of Molteno's life writing explores how her subjectivity was constructed through her experiences of social, material, cultural and religious aspects of her society. The discourses shaped by her society around, for example, sexuality, gender and race, I argue, had a marked impact on the formation of her subjectivity but also indicate that

her subjectivity was in flux: it (re)formed in response to new experiences, exposure to new people and ideas. Although Molteno is a woman neglected in South African cultural and literary-historical studies, my research shows why I consider her life and writing as deserving of critical investigation, and how she contributed to the socio-political landscape of her time.

Betty Molteno (see figure 1, 2 and 3) was the eldest child of the first Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, J.C. Molteno. She was a teacher, poet, vegetarian, anti-capitalist, and activist for various causes, which she mostly championed on behalf of disenfranchised South Africans. It is difficult to find an apt description of Molteno's ethical and philosophical stances as espoused in her writings; however, one overarching attribute that comes to mind is her incredible compassion for others, which informed her opinions and guided her decisions. As this chapter will illustrate in the final two analytical sections, Molteno's writing attests to an individual who felt a moral responsibility towards others and acted on her convictions. Spiritual by nature, her philosophies were initially informed by Christian principles but later morphed into a blend that included aspects of esoteric and Eastern philosophies. However, it is evident that she abided, throughout her life, by the creed, proclaimed again and again in her writing: "The Hope of the world is Love".[13] These spiritual values guided her political agenda and personal beliefs. Clergyman C.F. Andrews wrote the following of Molteno: "Her nationalism was of no narrow kind. It included every dweller in South Africa of whatever colour, creed or race", adding that her sympathies lay specifically with "original dwellers on the land. That which repelled others from them, only drew them closer to her own pure nature".[14] By all accounts, also evident in her own writing, Molteno possessed remarkable mental acuity, further enhanced by an enquiring, open mind. She was eclectic and eccentric in both habit and ideological conviction for a nineteenth-century South African subject, and espoused beliefs that only became dominant liberal discourse almost a century later (Corder and Plaut 22-54).

Structurally, the three interpretive sections of this chapter investigate three separate but related aspects of Molteno's subjectivity that emerge as pertinent in her life writing, namely: sexuality, religion and politics. Firstly, I consider Molteno's sexuality, its influence on the formation of her

[13] E.M. Molteno: University of Cape Town Libraries (UCTL), Special Collections (SC), Molteno-Murray Family Papers (MMFP), BC 330, Box 6. 9 September 1926. p. 1.
[14] Found in Betty's papers, a typed manuscript with heading 'Extracts from the Writings of "C.F. Andrews, re Indian Affairs in S.Africa"', volume xvi, p.274: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. p. 3.

subjectivity and the creation of a lesbian discourse by Molteno, her sister and her partners. This first interpretive section focuses on Molteno's adolescence and her life as a young woman and teacher. In the following section, I reflect on the impact of religious traditions and values on the shaping of her subjectivity, particularly Judeo-Christian and Mazdaznan teachings, as these emerge in the writing penned during her youth and especially the last decade of her life. Here I argue that Molteno's writing illustrates that her religious convictions had a remarkable impact on her relationship with her body. I further argue in this regard that Molteno's relational negotiation of her "I", first with God as relational other and later with the "cosmos", indicates her reliance on others to make sense of her own subjectivity. In the final section, I discuss Molteno's response to the gender and race politics of the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and how experiences of these politics shaped her subjectivity as evinced through her thematic treatment of women and racial issues in her autobiographical poetry. Throughout the three parts, I reflect on *how* Molteno scripts her thoughts and opinions. My textual analyses discuss what these life writing materials (mostly private) reveal of subjectivity formation. The three interpretive sections are not weighted equally: the first section pertaining to the creation of a lesbian discourse by Molteno, her sister and her partners is much longer than the last two sections. The reason for this length imbalance has to do with the requirements of each section, I quite simply needed more space to make a coherent and cohesive argument in the first interpretive section. Furthermore, much of the biographical and textual information I rely on in my arguments for the final two sections regarding religion and Molteno's poetry are provided and detailed in the first analytical section. The first section examines Molteno's childhood, adolescence and her life as a young woman teacher and forms the basis of the following two sections examining her later life and thus necessitated extensive discussion.

In addition, I consider the impact different notions of motherhood had on Molteno's subjectivity. Across all three interpretive sections I discuss Molteno's intriguing engagement with her perception of motherhood. First, I discuss her sexualisation of motherhood, then I examine the ways in which motherhood or 'mothers' became a focal point for her religious worship and devotion. Finally, I discuss the politicisation of her worship of motherhood and how this act shaped her politics, especially her thoughts on gender relations. Cherryl Walker writes the following conclusion to "Conceptualising Motherhood in Twentieth Century South Africa" (1995), in which

she examines the "political significance of motherhood" (417), relying on historical evidence and variances between different groups of women:

> The values attached to motherhood resonate with women not simply because of the power of patriarchy but because they mesh with aspects of their own (historically and materially grounded) experience and identity, as mothers. Mothers in the most fundamental sense are lifegivers: this is a capacity which could be celebrated without endorsing women's submission to men or the tyranny of particular under-resourced domestic and childcare regimes. The idea of peacemaker and the values of nurturing associated with the motherhood ideal are, in any case, surely worth protecting and extending – even, as Chodorow suggests, through the extension of the tasks and qualities associated with mothering, as an active relationship of responsibility and care for the next generation, to men. (437)

Motherhood, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, was primarily associated with and defined referring to biological *mothers*, women who gave birth to children. Molteno's diverse perceptions of motherhood, especially in the period in which she lived, are particularly interesting. Motherhood is not a key focus throughout this dissertation, although I refer to Smit's and Waring's status as mothers in the next two chapters. Thus, although Betty was not a biological mother or "lifegiver[…]" like the other two subjects I discuss, her different conceptions of motherhood were central to the formation of her subjectivity, as I discuss further on.

In my analysis, I draw on relevant theoretical approaches from the field of life writing studies to interpret Molteno's life writing and the formation of her subjectivity. So as not to burden this chapter's introduction with definitions, lengthy explanations of relevant concepts and approaches, I elaborate on my theoretical underpinning in each section, as these emerge in relation to the specific focus and interpretation. Yet it is necessary here to highlight one guiding comment made by life writing scholar and feminist historiographer Helen Buss. Noting that "[a]s a twentieth-century feminist, [she has] realized that in rescuing the female subject from oblivion of the unread archive, [she was] as capable of malformation as any" (182), Buss then asked:

> [C]an I locate the female subject, her system of dependencies, her intervention in discourse, while being careful not to deform the account by reading from above, from a class position as an academic that appropriates rather than explicates, and still be conscious of the feminist imperatives regarding the exposure of the sex-gender system that motivates my research from the beginning? At times the triple mandate seems impossible. (182)

I am conscious of the fact that my reading of Molteno's writing offers one perspective and *my* interpretation; therefore, I include extended extracts from her life writing to allow readers to respond to her writing and to 'interpret' for themselves. I utilise this methodology in all three main chapters. I remain mindful of Molteno's historical situatedness as a nineteenth-century female subject, meaning I attempt not to read 'from above'. I am conscious of her historical and social context and that she (like me) was a product of her socio-political, cultural and economic environment. Molteno's life writing archive is extensive and covers not only one specific period of her life. [15] The material encapsulates the socio-political cultural shifts of the society in which she lived during her long life. I now turn to a description of the primary materials I examine, and where they are located in the archive.

The BC 330 Molteno-Murray collection, stored at the Special Collections of the Jagger Library which form part of the University of Cape Town Libraries (UCTL),[16] contains 26 boxes of Molteno's life writing. Apart from these boxes, the collection holds material (letters, official documents, diaries, etc.) of the Molteno-Murray family and acquaintances, offering valuable additional insights into the life of Betty Molteno. From these, I have sourced the diary of Caroline Molteno (one of Betty's sisters, see figure 3). I use extracts from this diary in my first interpretive section to discern more about Betty Molteno's life as a young girl. Apart from an informative article by Catherine Corder and Martin Plaut regarding Molteno's involvement with Mohandas Gandhi's passive resistance movement in 1913 (2014), no academic study focuses on Molteno's life or conducts an analysis of her personal writing. Corder is currently writing a biography of Molteno which will address this lacuna in South African historiography. I am deeply indebted to

[15] The large store of Betty's writing from which I draw for this chapter creates both complications and limitations. I have read a substantial portion of the material and it is logistically impossible to refer to everything in this chapter. Therefore, where my comments or interpretations seem speculative and unsubstantiated, I have extrapolated these conclusions based on trends, themes and/or concerns raised throughout her work. In most cases, I provide only a few excerpts to illustrate or substantiate an argument. Scholars who have transcribed or read Betty's archival material have commented on the difficulty of reading her handwriting. I encountered similar problems and indicate these in my transcriptions by using ellipses, dashes, question marks or even providing different possibilities of what might have been written, indicated by square brackets. (For a sample of Betty's handwriting, see Figure 5.)

[16] The BC 330 Molteno-Murray collection was procured and donated by J.C. Molteno's granddaughter, Kathleen Murray, who was the daughter of Caroline Murray, née Molteno, the second oldest sibling of the fourteen Molteno children. On her death in 1982, Kathleen Murray donated the collection to the UCTL. Before her death she intended to have three volumes of family history and papers published in collaboration with the chief librarian, archivist and manager of the collection, Dr R.F.M. Immelman (R. Molteno 1).

her for her assistance in the formative stages of this chapter. Since I began preliminary research for this project in 2015, some online biographies of Molteno have appeared and have been updated regularly, such as *South African History Online*, *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online*, and even *Wikipedia* now lists an entry on Elizabeth Maria Molteno (Betty). In addition to the archival material and discussions with Corder (the online biographies either did not exist when I began this research or those that did were factually incorrect), I consulted numerous relevant published sources. These include: some of Molteno's letters published in *Alice Greene, Teacher and Campaigner: South African Correspondence 1887-1902* (2007); her protest poetry, written to challenge the motives of the British forces during the Anglo-Boer War, published in *Songs of the Veld and Other Poems* (2008); Phillida Brooke Simons' *Apples of the Sun* (1999) on the history of the Molteno family; and *The Molteno Family: A History of the Molteno and Related Families* (2018), an online website, which proved to be a veritable treasure trove of archival materials such as books, pamphlets, photographs, biographies and general information uploaded about the family.[17] Transcribed correspondence between Olive Schreiner and Molteno is available on the *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online.* Some letters written by Molteno to Emily Hobhouse are included in *Emily Hobhouse: Boer War Letters* (1984).

To my knowledge, my project is the first study to conduct a literary analysis of Betty Molteno's life writing. Thus, as an exploratory study, it does not offer a complete, rounded or definitive view of Molteno's identity, neither does it deal with the entire Betty Molteno archive. Although I have read and studied much of her personal writing through a *particular lens*, I have not read the entire archive. No doubt, the archive holds much potential for researchers, from various disciplines, who want to explore the content drawing on their own conceptual approaches. Below, I offer a brief biographical outline of Betty's life before I commence with my analysis of her life writing. Additional biographical information provided in my analysis is omitted from this outline.

By way of explanation, I use 'Betty' instead of 'Molteno' in the following biography and in the first interpretive section where I discuss the creation of a lesbian discourse. The reference to various members of the Molteno family by their surname would become unintelligible and I therefore rely on their first names. In the section on the creation of a lesbian discourse, I frequently refer to the youth diary of Caroline, Betty's sister, and my use of the surname 'Molteno' for both

[17] The website is administrated by Robert Molteno, a descendant of J.C. Molteno.

would cause confusion. The similarity between the surnames of two of Molteno's love interests, Gertrude *Hull* and Sarah *Hall*, could further complicate readability, which I aimed to avoid. To clarify, I refer to subjects by their first names in the following overview and the first analytical section; however, I use 'Molteno' throughout the rest of the chapter for the sake of consistency because I identify Hettie Smit and Joyce Waring by their surnames.

Betty Molteno: A Condensed Biography

Elizabeth Maria (Betty) Molteno (24 Sept 1852 – 25 Aug 1927), the first child of John Charles Molteno and Elizabeth Maria Jarvis, was born in the Karoo town Beaufort, later renamed Beaufort West. J.C. Molteno (1814-1886) relocated from England to South Africa at the age of 17, because, according to Betty, he apparently thought "there was no scope for him in England [to become prosperous]".[18] She further notes that he found employment at the South African Library situated in Cape Town. J.C.'s ambitious nature soon led him to accept a position at John Bardwell Ebden's "flourishing mercantile house" (Simons 15). Here he gained valuable knowledge regarding banking, trading and import/export ventures. As a result, J.C. founded Molteno & Co., at first a successful import/export business (Immelman 2) that failed in due course and led him to set his sights on farming (Simons 15). In 1841, J.C. bought his first piece of land in the Beaufort district. During the following years, he accrued property amounting to 500 hectares, which eventually yielded lucrative profits, making him a wealthy man. In 1844, J.C. married Maria Hewitson in Cape Town. She tragically died in childbirth less than a year later, shortly followed by the death of the infant (Simons 16-17). It took J.C. almost a decade to remarry. His second wife, Elizabeth Jarvis, daughter of Hercules Jarvis, the first mayor of Cape Town, bore him 14 of his 19 children (Simons 15-19).[19] When the Cape Colony formed a representative government in 1854, J.C. was elected as the member of the Beaufort district.[20] Every year during parliamentary sittings the Molteno family would trek down to Cape Town to board at the Jarvis's Somerset House near Green Point (Simons 19; Murray *Reminiscences of the Old Cape* 7-9). In 1863, J.C. purchased the Claremont Estate. This property would become the setting of Betty and her siblings' childhoods.[21]

[18] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 1 September 1926. p. 2.
[19] Four of the fourteen children passed away at a young age. Four girls and ten boys were born to this union (Barham 3).
[20] K. Murray: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 4 February 1970.
[21] K. Murray: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 4 February 1970.

It was around this time that the Molteno family permanently moved to Cape Town, where J.C. would dedicate the remainder of his life to politics. He became the first Prime Minister of the Cape Colony in 1872, after England granted the colony a responsible government, for which he also advocated.[22] Subsequently, he was knighted by Queen Victoria, and became known as Sir John Molteno.

Between 1874 and 1875 disaster befell the Molteno family. On the 8th of April 1874, Elizabeth Maria Jarvis Molteno died, shortly after giving birth to her 14th child, Sophia Mary. Less than a year later Sophia also died. The 61-year-old J.C. did not wait long to remarry. His third wife, Sobella (Minnie) Blenkins, was 29 years old. She was the stepdaughter his late wife's sister, and a close friend of his three eldest daughters. It emerges in Betty's and Caroline's letters and journals of the time that they initially struggled to reconcile themselves with this turn of events. Although they loved both their father and Minnie, and wanted them to be happy, they were torn by devotion to the mother they were still mourning. For example, Betty wrote to Lady Barkly: "It seemed to me that I might succeed in crushing down the feeling about Papa's marriage, but that it would kill me, and that knowing I felt so it would be wrong of me".[23] In spite of the family's (and the public's) opinion of the nuptials, the ceremony took place on 7 July 1875. In the following years, Minnie would bear J.C. four more children.

For Betty, the years after completing her schooling were difficult. Her sisters Caroline and Maria married. Betty remained at home without their stimulating, comforting companionship. The physical symptoms of her loneliness and boredom are revealed in her journals of the time. She painstakingly notes her suffering from headaches, the days she was bedridden due to various illnesses, or spent idly, reading to 'Papa', as well as the customary courtesy calls she made. Nearing thirty, she tired of this idle life. Simons writes: "[b]y the 1880s Betty had rejected the accepted life of a young Victorian lady in which paying tedious calls, indulging in mild gossip and unexciting entertainment were the order of the day" (34). Betty then made a decision that would shape not only the rest of her life, but also the lives of others. She decided to study abroad in England, and to disavow society's expectation of living a life as wife and mother (Simons 34). In 1926, the year leading up to her death, she wrote: "The children who were clamouring for birth inside me could

[22] K. Murray: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 4 February 1970.
[23] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 1875. p. 17.

not find the road to physical development and expression because I was vowed to celibacy in those years when to so many women marriage is the inevitable next step".[24]

On her way to study at Newnham College, Cambridge, in 1883, she met Sarah Hall. Sarah was recruiting teachers for the Young Ladies' Seminary at Graaff-Reinet and they became close friends.[25] Although she admitted to "thoroughly [enjoying her] new life, and the new surroundings", Betty left Newnham before completing her degree to teach at the Seminary in Graaf-Reinet. The two women later took up posts at Collegiate School in Port Elizabeth where Sarah Hall was appointed headmistress in 1886. Sarah was not only an inspiration to Betty as an exceptional teacher, according to Betty's diaries and letters of the time, she was also her intimate partner before Betty's entered into a life-long relationship with Alice Greene (see figure 2).

In May 1889 Sarah died (Simons 39) and Betty was appointed as Head Mistress of the Collegiate School, a post she apparently filled masterfully until 1900 when she resigned due to pressure from the governing body in response to her public support of the Boers and her criticism of British interference in the two Boer Republics (Simons 49). Of her teaching experience, Betty writes: "And so I was brought among the Cosmic Mothers who were tending, loving, blessing, and educating the children of other women. And a blessed work it was, and it has brought its rich reward in the opening of our hearts to vaster streams of love".[26] Her sister Caroline also thought that teaching was Betty's calling, as well as salvation, and wrote to their Aunt Nancy in 1886 that Betty seemed "thoroughly interested in her work" and that it was "such a good thing for her".[27] Betty's teaching methods were apparently "in advance of her time" (Simons 39). She taught her pupils proper sex education, which was unusual in a nineteenth-century South African context. In her capacity as teacher at the Collegiate School, she "[drew] no salary" (Van Reenen 532), given her access to "independent (if modest) [financial] means" (Corder and Plaut 24). The fact that she

[24] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 28 September 1926. p. 1.
[25] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 64. 1 November 1883. In Marthinus van Bart's edition (2008) of *Songs of the Veld and Other Poems* (1902), he states that Betty was "educated at Miss Hall's Seminary for Young Ladies at Graaff-Reinet" (xxxi) and then went to study at Cambridge, which is factually incorrect. She was educated at Miss Gertrude Hull's school in Cape Town and was a teacher, not student, at Graaff-Reinet, after pursuing her studies in England.
[26] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 28 September 1926. p. 1.
[27] C. Murray: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 15 September 1886. p. 38.

drew no salary indicates her devotion to education and her students, but also signals her privileged socio-economic position.

After leaving her post as Head Mistress, she devoted her life to various socio-political causes, beginning with her participation in anti-war protests. In Cape Town, in 1899, she joined the South African Conciliation Committee and made various speeches in the surrounding Boland area (Van Bart xxxi). The committee was dedicated to repair the damage wrought in relations between Brit and Boer during the war, and to "re-establish trust and co-operation between" the two groups (van Bart xix). After the war in 1902 Betty wrote: "England has made a fatal mistake in trying by violent means to incorporate [South Africa] within her Empire. It is not a gentle tender fragile plant, it is tough, hardy, deep-rooted and enduring like the vegetable growths of the Karoo".[28]

For some years after 1904 Betty lived in Geneva, Switzerland, and many months would pass before she saw Alice again. At first, they travelled together through Europe, but Alice returned to England to care for some of her family members (*Olive Schreiner Letters Online* 2016). In 1909 Betty met the Reverend John Langalibalele Dube[29] and Mohandas Gandhi in London (Corder and Plaut 25). Both men greatly inspired her, and although their political ideologies and campaigns were segregated along racial lines, she "identified strongly with these men in their struggle to have the Colour Bar excluded from the Union constitution" (Corder and Plaut 25). Betty and Alice set sail for South Africa early in 1912 with the intent of contributing to Dube's and Gandhi's campaigns. Betty travelled alone to Ohlange (Alice remained in Cape Town to care for the sickly Emily Hobhouse) in the then Natal, to Dube and his wife's school, where she and Alice had commissioned a cottage to be built for them (Corder and Plaut 26). She stayed at Ohlange, a short walk from Gandhi's Phoenix settlement, while she was assisting Gandhi with the passive resistance movement. Reflecting on these events later in her life, Betty wrote: "Emily Hobhouse

[28] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 5, "Day to day Journal, Three Boer Generals on Board. R.M.S. Saxon". 15 August 1902. p. 3.

[29] Dube, along with Saul Msane, Sol Plaatje and Thomas Mapikela were the founding members of the African Native National Congress with Dube as president of the party. The party, now called the African National Congress, is currently South Africa's ruling party. Sol Plaatje was a very close friend of Betty and she regularly mentioned him in her journals from 1920 and onwards.

was indeed privileged to have such whole-hearted help as Alice gave her at that period. I could not do any of it for the Indian Passive Resistance Movement, in Natal, was absorbing my energies".[30]

Around August 1914,[31] Betty and Alice rented a cottage in Rondebosch (Cape Town). They lived there for almost a year (Alice was still teaching) before renting a place in Gordon's Bay. This was where they stayed until they left for England in September 1916. They arrived in the heat of World War One. Their first few months in London were mostly spent visiting their aging friends Olive Schreiner and Emily Hobhouse, who were both ailing.[32] Betty rented rooms next to Schreiner's at Porchester Place but did not make much use of them as she was staying with the then frail Alice. These rooms were seemingly rented to provide Schreiner with more space and not specifically for Betty's own use (*The Olive Schreiner Letters Online* 2016).

In April 1919 Alice became seriously ill and the couple went to Trefaldwyn, Wales. Alice's health did not improve, so she relocated to the nearby town Llaundrindod to live with May and Freddie (a married couple, blood niece and nephew of Betty). Alice died in Cornwall while staying with her sister Helen in Trevone, with a devoted and heartbroken Betty at her side. Alice's death (28 January 1920) is recorded in the *Chronicles of the Family*, a newsletter the Molteno relatives and descendants published three times a year (1913-1920). Kathleen Murray (Caroline's daughter), the editor, noted on Alice's passing: "our dearly loved Alice Greene [passed away]. The life that had so freely used for others the great gifts bestowed, was freely yielded when the call came for a wider service" (April 1920, 56). Betty later wrote to Caroline, saying that although Alice's body was gone "her essential self [was] so wondrously & lovingly with [her still]".[33] In the remaining seven years of Betty's life, spent living close to Hampstead Heath in England, she continued to devote

[30] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 23 November 1926. p 2.
[31] Van Bart writes: "In 1913 Betty and Alice retired to Trevone in Cornwall. Both died there [...]" (xxxiii). This is clearly incorrect as indicated in the rest of my biography and should be noted by scholars reading Van Bart's work.
[32] Betty also wrote interesting letters to her family during this time, providing an analysis and account of the war. In the following example (October 15th) her observations and ideological perceptions are clearly articulated: "I have been roused out of sleep because Zepps were about and as Olive and I sat on a bus, a man volunteered the information that in his neighbourhood, in the East End, a bomb fell on a public house, killing 2 women, a baby and 2 barmen, and exploding the great barrels of beer. Indeed the Devil is unchained and is forging himself with hate and blood, spying [sic] out his venom upon Mankind, that still dares to believe that somewhere in the Universe, Love and not Hate reigns supreme. These must be the birth throes of a New Humanity, whose watchwords will be: Love, Light, Life" (*Chronicle* April 1917, 9).
[33] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 23 July 1920.

her time to what she considered as worthy causes (which I discuss further on). It was also during this stage of her life that she converted to the mystic Mazdaznan religion. She wrote most of her poetry during this period, as well as a series of reflective journals. Betty died on 25 August 1927 and is buried in a "dual grave" next to Alice at St. Merryn's "on the Cornish moors" (Van Reenen 527). Their tombstone reads: "They loved and served South Africa" (Van Reenen 527).

Figure 2 Betty Molteno and Alice Greene

Love, Intimacy and Sexuality: The Creation of a Lesbian Discourse

This section analyses the life writing of Betty, her sister Caroline and her intimate partner, Alice Greene, to discuss Betty's sexuality and its influence on her subjectivity, and to examine the creation of a lesbian discourse in nineteenth-century South Africa by these three women. The

primary sources included for analysis in this section are Betty's journals, correspondence between Betty and Alice Greene, letters written by Betty to various acquaintances, and Caroline's youth diary. By way of introduction, I provide a historical overview of nineteenth-century perceptions of lesbianism in South Africa and Britain and then detail the framework employed in my analysis. My discussion begins with Betty's adolescence, as perceived through the naïve eyes of her sister Caroline, depicting the awakening of Betty's sexuality when she fell in love with her teacher Gertrude Hull. Betty did not keep a diary while she was a teenager, thus it is necessary to rely on Caroline's impressions; however, Caroline's inability to understand her sister's sexuality sheds much needed light on the perceptions regarding lesbianism in nineteenth-century South Africa. Since no other research has been conducted on lesbianism in nineteenth-century South Africa, there is limited information detailing public perceptions towards lesbians. Caroline's diary then serves as a primary text to expound on how lesbianism was articulated and understood at that time. Furthermore, my analysis of Caroline's diary forms a cornerstone in my discussion of Betty's sexuality and the development of a lesbian discourse. Caroline was a prolific diarist and keen observer of her sister's actions. I thus utilise fourteen-year-old Caroline's valuable observations of her one-year-older sister, Betty, and analyse what she unconsciously reveals about her sister's sexuality. I then proceed with an examination of Betty's journals and letters written to associates, lovers and friends to track the shifts in Molteno's sexuality. These materials indicate power dynamics which formed between her and her sexual partners. I further rely on the correspondence between Betty and Alice and use extracts from Alice's letters addressed to Betty. I argue that Betty remained relatively 'voiceless' about her sexual desire when younger (while she was in love with Gertrude Hull), but seemingly gained voice and managed to intone agency (though limited) in her writing while in a relationship with Sarah Hall. Finally, I show that she then emerged as authoritative partner in her relationship with Alice Greene.

Before continuing with a discussion of Caroline's, Betty's and Alice's life writing, I need to establish how lesbianism was defined, categorised and understood in nineteenth-century South Africa. Let me start with the legal status of lesbianism. Judith Butler explains: "[f]eminist cultural anthropology and kinship studies have shown how cultures are governed by conventions that not only regulate and guarantee the production, exchange, and consumption of material goods, but also reproduce bonds of kinship itself, which require taboos and a punitive regulation of reproduction to effect that end" ("Performative Acts and Gender Constitution" 408).

Homosexuality endangers societal efforts concerning reproduction and was frequently met in history by constraints and regulatory systems of punishment, both "indirect" and "obvious" (Butler "Performative Acts" 412). These sets of punishment included the regulation of gender performance to curb dissent and non-conformism. Female homosexuality, however, was *never* illegal in South Africa (Tremblay, Paternotte & Johnson 155) or Britain (Montgomery Hyde 6), which indicates either the inability or unwillingness of the legislature to criminalise women making love to other women. From a legislative point of view, once female homosexuality is named in law, its existence is admitted and acknowledged. Male homosexual acts were referred to and legally tried in court as sodomy (South Africa and Britain) or buggery (Britain). However, the less than rigorous pursuit of female homosexuals suggests that society's lawmakers and prosecutors were reluctant to admit to perceived immorality or baseness concerning its women. Alternatively, Sharon Marcus suggests that "[d]esire for women was the crucible in which femininity was formed" (166) and that intimacy, desire, and homoeroticism between women in Victorian society was to a certain degree encouraged, was not "taboo" (with reference to Butler here), and was almost never policed by society, a point I return to below.

I refer to Betty and her partners as 'lesbians' in this study to denote a sexual identity that they themselves might not necessarily have identified with and certainly did not define as such at the time. Although it may be unhistorical and anachronistic to refer to Betty as a lesbian, it is the most apt description to define her sexual proclivities and identity according to contemporary scholarship. Some scholars have posited "that it is unhistorical to use current definitions of lesbianism to interrogate the 'mentalities' of the past" (Edwards 150). They prefer to refer to perceived female 'romantic' friendships as homoerotic but, given the overt and sexual nature of Betty's relationships alluded to in her private accounts (letters and journals), I consider it more of an ethical transgression *not* to refer to her as a lesbian. However, I do not analyse her relationships, as inferred in written accounts, within frameworks of current understandings of lesbianism. I have to date been unable to locate any detailed scholarly South African research regarding lesbian relationships in the nineteenth or early twentieth century (see footnote pertaining to James

Barry).[34] Considering this dearth in South African sexuality/queer studies, I draw from British scholarship to gain a broader and general understanding of lesbian relationships at the time, specifically public opinion about the occurrence of 'illicit' female love. Since Gertrude Hull, Sarah Hall and Alice Greene (Molteno's intimate partners) were all British women living or working in South Africa, and the Cape was a British Colony during this period of South African history, it seems British scholarship in lesbian studies will be the most appropriate research to draw on. Jessica Murray saliently observes, "[w]hile a number of researchers have produced important work on same sex sexualities in a South African context, their focus has disproportionately been on the experiences of gay men, with lesbians often being relegated to the margins of the discussion" (Murray 87-88). Brenna M. Munro similarly explains that "female same-sex intimacies have been largely invisible in [discourses of colonialism and anticolonialism]" (viii-ix) although lesbian scholarship became more prominent in South Africa towards the 1980s. Given the disproportionate privileging of male homosexuality in South African scholarship and the hiatus in theory and case studies regarding nineteenth-century South African lesbianism, I locate my own inquiry in lesbian studies rather than queer studies or homosexual studies in a general sense. This discussion aims to contribute to South African studies on lesbianism (or female homosexuality), specifically nineteenth-century lesbianism, but I am fully cognisant of the fact that one case study should not be regarded as representative of all nineteenth-century lesbians in South Africa. More research and case studies are required before large-scale theorisation can commence.

The term 'lesbian' only came into use in the early twentieth century (Edwards 150-151). During the nineteenth-century women in same-sex relationships were called "bachelor wom[e]n" (Hobhouse cited in Viljoen 193) by members of the general public or they were known as women

[34] It was discovered upon the death of Dr James Barry, an Irish surgeon, that 'he' was a woman. James Barry lived his life as a man from the moment he donned a male persona to pursue medical studies in Edinburgh, and subsequently a military career. He was posted to Cape Town in 1816, became close friends with the Governor of the time, Lord Charles Somerset, and stories were doing the rounds that they were participating in perceived lewd acts. His gender and sexual identity is thus not clear in scholarship (Holland 2017; Du Preez 2008). But apart from the interesting case of the transgendered / crossdressing James Barry, there is little written about *lesbianism* in nineteenth-century South Africa, which is the focus of this section.

with Sapphic tendencies.[35] What was called "romantic friendships" (Edwards 150) between women in the nineteenth century were frequently homosexual in nature or akin to expressing homoerotic emotions and intimacies, but these behaviours and emotions were generally relegated to spheres of natural expressions of women's innate need to nurture and express love (Edwards 150-152). Romantic friendships between women were not frowned upon by society, although many of these were in fact of a sexual nature (Marcus 13-14). In nineteenth-century sexology female homosexuals were called "congenital inverts" (by Havelock Ellis and J.A. Symonds), pathologised as women with male physical characteristics and personality traits, thus 'inverted females' (Cohler 3-15). Women who were attracted to congenital inverts who were 'feminine' were regarded as not necessarily suffering from inversion, but that they were attracted to the 'male' attributes of their lover (Cohler 11-15). 'Feminine' inverted women, or "pseudohomosexual[s]" (Edwards 151), were not even considered in studies of sexology or medical pathology in the nineteenth century. These views regarding which women could even be considered as female homosexuals pose a difficulty in discussing societal perceptions towards 'feminine' women in same-sex relationships (as Betty and Alice would have been described in the nineteenth century), since this sexual orientation was not even acknowledged by scholars of the time. Furthermore, Edwards points out that women in homosexual relationships were not considered a threat to Victorian or colonial society because women had no independent financial means and necessarily *had to* succumb to marriage and the concomitant procreation. Only after more women were able to enter the public and economic spheres as employees such as nurses, teachers and headmistresses (for example Betty and Sarah) towards the end of the nineteenth century, were women "in a position to reject marriage altogether" (150) and did intimate relationships between women elicit ambivalent attitudes as well as closer scrutiny for the perceived threat to the status quo. The terms "mannish" (Newton 558) or "lesbian" came into use in the twentieth century, particularly after the

[35] Lesbianism was referred to as Sapphism or a lesbian as a Sapphic during the nineteenth century. Sappho professed her love for women and girls in her poetry and is known as a lesbian poet (from the archaic period of Greece) hailing from the Greek Island Lesbos. The etymological root of the term lesbian comes from Lesbos and up until the mid-nineteenth century denoted things related to Lesbos, a citizen of Lesbos or 'rule by women'. But in the nineteenth century what we now consider 'lesbians' were termed Sapphics.

infamous obscenity trial of Marguerite Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928).[36] Consequently, the quintessential image of the lesbian was associated with what is contemporarily considered a 'butch' lesbian (Edwards 150-151; Newton 560).

Although twentieth-century developments ushered lesbianism into public discourse, nineteenth-century female homosexuality did not spark public discussion, scrutiny or prohibition by law, and existed or functioned largely 'outside' of public discourse or, at least, normative discourse. It was therefore difficult for Betty and presumably other lesbians to draw from visible or existing frameworks of homosexual behaviours and narratives on which to base their own sexual experiences and relationships. Unfortunately, South African scholars are still unsure what kinds of communities and social networks were formed, whether or how groups of female homosexuals spoke to each other and referred to themselves. What is known though in international literature is that lesbian women invariably turned to existing referential or familiar frameworks as a kind of map on which to base their relationships, such as the family unit or heterosexual examples. Barry Reay, for instance, notes: "[there are] numerous case studies of women who formed close erotic relationships with other women. They include those who [...] conceived their same-sex attractions according to societal family models, referring to their female partners as husband or wife, daughter, sister, or aunt. They considered their relationships as marriages" (224). However, as I also found in my investigation of Betty and her partners' writing, "[w]omen who established long-term relationships with other women, by contrast, saw themselves, and were seen by others, as placid embodiments of the middle-class ideal of marriage: a bond defined by sex that also had the power to sanctify sex" (Marcus 21). As I will show, Betty and Alice's (sexual) relationship was originally conceptualised within frameworks of a nuclear family: Betty and Sarah as 'mothers' and Alice as

[36] Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* tells the story of protagonist Stephan Gordon, a young girl becoming a woman who desires to be a 'man' and who falls in love with women. It also details the public's opposition to women's sexual relationships with each other and the harsh realities lesbian women faced under public scrutiny and society's 'abhorrence' towards same-sex relationships. The novel is to a certain extent based on the work of sexologists and Havelock Ellis' introduction pertaining to "female inverts", which explains the 'theory' of female attraction and homosexuality to readers. Although explicitly a lesbian novel, there are no sex scenes in the novel, but the judge in the obscenity case ruled the book obscene and ordered that all copies should be destroyed. Interestingly, Hall's novel was not the first lesbian novel or text, but the public obscenity trial and outcry published in all the newspapers highlighted the lesbian community and made visible lesbian lifestyles and discourses in the public discourse. Hall's text is still regarded as seminal by scholars and some consider this book to be the 'first' female homosexual text because of the infamous trial and the book's openly lesbian author (Jennings 1906-1909; Blount 90; Edwards 150-151).

their 'daughter'. Moreover, I found no evidence that those who were aware of Betty and Alice's almost thirty years of partnership condemned their union.

I discuss three different women with whom Betty was in love. In the case of Gertrude Hull, Betty's school teacher, it becomes clear that Betty was in love with her (although my source is not Betty's writings but rather her sister's journals), but whether the romantic feelings were reciprocated by Gertrude remains unclear to me because I did not study Gertrude's private documents. Thus, I refrain from any speculation or observation about Gertrude's feelings: she is not the primary subject of this study. I do, however, consider Caroline's accounts of Betty's statements and actions at the time as written in her youth diary. Caroline's diary is crucial to my study of written discourses regarding lesbianism in nineteenth-century South Africa. I further rely on the correspondence between Betty and Gertrude written after Sarah's death.

What can be gleaned from Betty's childhood in Cape Town, and her character as a young girl and teenager are made evident in the anecdotes and perceptions painstakingly noted by her younger sister, Caroline, in her journals (covering the years 1868-1875). According to these, and Betty's own private journals and diaries, Betty suffered from bouts of depression, 'melancholia', debilitating headaches and severe anxiety. These afflictions sometimes manifested in what has come to be termed as prototypical 'female hysteria' of the nineteenth century by scholars of nineteenth-century women (Gilbert and Gubar 3-76; Driver 459). Caroline notes, for example, that "Betty's delicate health and low spirits" was a "[hard] trial" [37] not only for her, but also for the rest of the family. What emerges from Caroline's life writing, as I will illustrate in my analysis, is that Betty struggled with her sexuality as a young lesbian and that she felt desperately alone and alienated at home. Her feelings of isolation were possibly worsened by her sexual orientation. My reading of Caroline's journals (not Betty's) is central to my discussion since I show, through examining Caroline's journals, the unintelligibility of nineteenth-century lesbianism in how she struggled to articulate what her sister revealed to her. It is worth mentioning here that anyone with pre-existing knowledge of Betty's sexuality, or even any contemporary reader, will immediately grasp Caroline's description of Betty's sexuality, even though Caroline herself did not understand the sexuality and the circumstances she was 'accidentally' verbalising.

[37] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 11 September 1868. p 1.

Figure 3 Betty Molteno and Caroline Molteno

Caroline noted early in her youth diary certain incidents of interest. For instance, she described an event where Betty went to visit their teacher "Miss Gertrude Hull" at the school she managed. Due to heavy rain, both Caroline and Betty had to stay overnight at the school. Caroline related that Betty and Miss Hull "went for a walk", and she wondered whether Betty "then gave [Miss Hull her] confidence for [she does] not know what else to call it".[38] The next day's entry notes: "Betty slept with Miss Hull last night which appeared to astonish the girls very much. I long for a quiet

[38] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 17 September 1868. p 2.

moment with her".[39] From the onset of the youth diaries, Caroline meticulously noted the intimacies and exchanges between Betty and Gertrude, as well as her own interpretation of Betty's state of mind. In part, one could attribute Caroline's observations to fear of losing her sister, friend and confidante,[40] since it appears that Betty withdrew from her family and transferred her confidence to Gertrude. Caroline's writing seemingly became a conduit, on some level, to deal with her confusion and feelings of isolation caused by Betty's behaviour and infatuation with Gertrude. From the above quotations, two noteworthy facts can be deduced. Betty confided in Gertrude and Gertrude encouraged and facilitated these conversations. Secondly, Gertrude allowed Betty to sleep in her bed, which "astonish[ed]" the boarders at the school. Reference to their astonishment indicates that this was a singular occurrence and not something that happened regularly. Furthermore, Caroline's account implies an awareness of an event she interpreted as unconventional. The kind of intimacy Gertrude and Betty shared contrasted with the relationship Gertrude had with other pupils. Later in the diary, Caroline wrote: "[...] Betty got a letter from Miss Hull. She did not let me read it".[41] On other occasions, Betty allowed Caroline to read Gertrude's letters, but in this instance, she chose not to share the content, implying that her teacher either dispensed advice about Betty's personal struggles or that what she wrote was private to both sender and recipient. Regardless of the content of Gertrude's letter, one can assume that their relationship was of an intimate nature, different from the relationship Gertrude had with other students in her care. Intimacy is linked to self-disclosure between people and partly depends on the kind of reception received once confidences are shared (Baumeister and Bratslavsky 50). Reciprocal self-disclosure facilitates growth in intimacy, resulting from a feeling of togetherness, closeness and "warmth" (Baumeister and Bratslavsky 50). From my reading of Caroline's journals, it clearly appears that intimacy existed between Gertrude and Betty.

[39] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 18 September 1868. p 2.
[40] For example, Caroline states: "I have felt so low spirited since last I wrote in this journal. I am so unsettled. Oh! I can look back already to childhood's happy days with an almost longing gaze. I can feel now the want of a sister's love and confidence and doubly so having once felt it. It seems so hard that now just when we should begin to appreciate one another she should transfer her confidence to another, for so it seems she has done, to Miss Hull. I sometimes do so long for a friend, for sympathy. I wonder whether Betty knows how I feel it; she has Miss Hull, I have no one" (C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 23 August 1869. p 59).
[41] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 6 July 1869. p 46.

Following on the incidents mentioned above, what emerges from Caroline's diary is that Betty wanted to leave home, and longed to become a boarder at Gertrude's school. She sought to stay with Gertrude who, as Caroline noted, "alone seemed able to exert an influence over [Betty]" [42] when she had one of her fits or mental breakdowns. J.C. Molteno finally agreed to Betty's request, only after careful cajoling and lobbying by Elizabeth Molteno (Betty's mother) and Caroline on Betty's behalf. During one of Betty's bad spells, she tried to convey her romantic feelings regarding Gertrude to Caroline, who did not fully comprehend its significance. Caroline wrote:

> [...] Betty was not very well in the evening and Mamma was afraid it was too cold for her to go to Miss Hull's. When I went upstairs a few minutes after, I found her standing at the open window, and when Mamma told her to come down she so abruptly said she would not and was so disrespectful that I was quite surprised, and even frightened, and I fancy I spoke to her more sharply and angrily that I ought. I went to Miss Hull's in no happy mood; the Andersons were there, but I did not care to join them so Miss Hull gave me Betty's things. Letty and Lizzie walked home with me. I found Betty sitting on the stoep, she looked flushed and her eyes showed that she had been crying. She asked me to go upstairs with her for a few minutes. At first I refused, but then I thought it better to go; we sat together on the bed for some time and she begged me not to judge her so hardly [*sic*] and said that when she felt as she did that evening she hardly knew what she said. I was not cowardly then and I did tell her what I thought, though I could scarcely command my voice; she said it was a fancy of hers to be with Miss Hull, she liked it. Oh! I wish I could be her sole friend, I ought to be, but I suppose I don't deserve it. She went to Miss Hull's in the evening. I walked with them there but did not stay [...].[43]

This extract from Caroline's diary (18 January 1869) is telling in its conveyance of Betty's struggle with her sexual guilt and anxiety. In the description, Caroline noted Betty's "flushed" appearance, that she was not "very well", that she "begged" for understanding, and was ashamed of her outburst but could not control her actions when she "felt as she did". In this instance, it appears Betty tried to convey her romantic feelings for Gertrude to Caroline but lacked either the will, words or terminology to do so. Instead, Betty explained to Caroline that "it was a fancy of hers to be with Miss Hull, she liked it". 'Like' and 'fancy', in this context, seemingly imply romantic feelings. Betty's outburst and actions, as related and interpreted by Caroline in the above extract, reveal Betty's desire to be with Gertrude, her attempt to convey this desire, and her inability to do so.

[42] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 21 June 1870. p. 95.
[43] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 18 January 1869. p. 23.

One notes Caroline's puzzlement at Betty's confessions and her failure to understand what her sister was trying to relay.

After completing her schooling, J.C. insisted Betty should move back home. This caused Betty much anxiety and suffering. Again she pleaded with her father to allow her to stay with Gertrude. This time, however, he did not consent, and Betty had to return home. The following extract illustrates four telling facts perceived by Caroline: Gertrude exerted influence over Betty, Betty desired to be with her, experienced "strange fancies", and the family physician, Dr Ebden, did not "[understand] her case".[44] Caroline noted:

> Saturday 19th June 1869
>
> I feel so miserable this evening. Last night Betty told me that she was sure she ought to tell Papa that she would have to go back to Miss Hull's; she owns that it is a strange fancy. [B]ut she says that if Papa and Mamma knew what wild thoughts or fancies she has sometimes they would be only too glad to think that she was with someone who could in some sort control them. It is such a bitter disappointment to me, I had hoped to do so much, to be so happy with her sympathy, but I could bear that but to think of Papa's disappointment, he has so been looking forward to her coming home, constantly talking about it and Mamma has been arranging things and proposing plans, I can't bear that they should be disappointed and yet Betty can't help it. I don't know what to do. I wish we could both speak to Dr. Ebden about it, but I am such a coward in the daytime, and besides, what are we to say? He could hardly, nor Papa and Mamma, understand such a fancy. I am sure it is the consequence of ill-health. Oh! how I wish she were as strong as I am. It would not take much to make me happy. It is a great comfort to think that all troubles are sent by God, that they can only last for a time. [...] I wish that I could manage to interest her in some occupation at home. I think idleness is very injurious to her.[45]

In this excerpt Caroline drew links between Betty's "wild thoughts" and strange "fanc[ies]" to be with Gertrude, and called the desire a "consequence of ill-health". Yet, it appears Caroline understood in this instance that Betty's ill-health was not the desire for another woman but being unable to be with said woman that manifested and made Betty "wild". Caroline opined that Betty could not "help" her desires and actions, wanted to explain this to Dr Ebden, and then asked: "what are we to say?". It seems whatever needed to be explained was 'unspeakable' or in a space 'outside' of social and medical language frameworks, and that Dr Ebden and Betty's parents could not "understand such a fancy". Caroline's writing at least exhibits a rudimentary comprehension of

[44] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 14 September 1868. p. 1.
[45] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 19 June 1869. p. 42.

what transpired between Betty and Gertrude. As can be seen in the above extract, Betty tried to explain her sexuality to Caroline, but Caroline then specifically makes mention that neither her parents or Dr Ebden could "understand such a fancy". The connection Caroline made here between the manifestation of illness described as "wild fancies" Betty could not "help" and Betty's desire to be with another woman is noteworthy, specifically because the link between illness, or rather medical pathology, and alternative sexuality (homosexuality) was only theorised towards the end of the nineteenth century by scholars of sexology Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds with the publication of *Sexual Inversion* (1897).[46] Caroline unknowingly made a similar association as a young girl in 1869 to explain her sister's peculiar behaviour and sexuality. I think that in Betty's case there *is* in fact a link between her medical symptoms, idiosyncratic behaviour and sexuality. To emphasise, I do not think she was sick because she was lesbian, but that she became ill because she struggled to vocalise her desire for other women. Betty was unable as a teenage girl to communicate her desire, either because she lacked the vocabulary in which to articulate what would have been perceived as strange desires, or because she was afraid of society's inability to comprehend or accept her desire. Hers was thus a forced silence. One must ask: If there existed no language in South Africa, or at least in Betty's immediate environment, to account for her sexuality, how did she express it? If subjects are partly constituted by language, what happens when no language exists to define the subject?

It seems that Betty's subjectivity as young girl was thus shaped by a sexual desire that struggled to find expression in language; her frustration possibly manifested in tantrums and headaches. I am not suggesting that her frustration about not being able to find adequate expression for her sexual orientation is the only reason for her outbursts, but rather that it was a contributing factor. For example, after Betty was compelled to return home after completing her schooling, Caroline noted: "always after she has been with Miss Hull, she is morbid and nervous after[wards]".[47] Caroline wrote about Betty's dark and troubled moods after she spent time with Gertrude, indicating that Betty might have suffered being away from Gertrude or that their encounters were not particularly satisfying for Betty. It is also possible that Betty's relationship with Gertrude

[46] Earlier theorisation of homosexuality was written by a German author, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, and published between 1864-1865. His theories differed from other later theorists since as a homosexual man he believed homosexuality was "inborn" and not an "acquired vice" (Kennedy 26). His works were not translated into English until the late 20th century.
[47] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 23 July 1869. p. 52.

became strained and, as readers already know, theirs was not a long-term, lasting relationship. A sexual relationship between a school principal and pupil could not have been easy, as inherent power imbalances were probably also at play.

As example of Betty's experience of loneliness and alienation at home, I quote from a letter she wrote in 1875 to Lady Anne Maria Barkly,[48] in which she disclosed the following: "Ever since I was a little child I have been trying to find some one [*sic*] to love me and make clear for me those things which puzzled me, but all the people I did confide in were more or less failures".[49] Further in the letter she also confessed to a strained relationship with her own mother because she felt misunderstood. As discussed in Chapter One, subjectivity is formed by time, place, and context, and develops in accordance with or opposition to available discourses and dominant ideologies of specific geospatial communities. In terms of subjectivity, one could say that Betty's formation was characterised by strife and an inability to express herself, i.e. the things that "puzzled" her for which there were no discursive formulations. Her situatedness as a young girl growing up in the nineteenth-century Cape colony partly accounts for her difficulties. Nineteenth-century Cape Town with its restrictive socio-cultural norms, typified by heteronormative and patriarchal "sex-gender system[s]" (Buss 182), produced the knowledge and social frameworks Betty as subject internalised and by which she was constituted. Sexuality marked by "opacity" (Butler *Giving* 40), by knowledges that did not account for her sexuality, thus played a significant part in forming Betty's subjectivity. The excerpts from Caroline's diary demonstrates that Betty struggled to convey her sexual attraction to other women and in turn was not always understood. Indeed, exemplary of this inability to articulate her feelings is the fact that I have to rely on Caroline's writings, not Betty's, to make my deductions. The following paragraphs argue that although there was no visible discourse on lesbianism to internalise or language to articulate their desire, Betty and her partners created their own lesbian discourse by borrowing from religious and familial frameworks. In the course of Betty's life, the authority and agency of her "I" changed as she

[48] Anne Maria Barkly was the wife of Henry Barkly, the Governor of the Cape Colony (1870-1877) and a close political associate of John Molteno. The families were close and the Molteno daughters were seemingly very attached to Anne Maria Barkly since most of them wrote very personal letters to her, especially after the death of their own mother.
[49] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 1875. p. 17.

gradually came to understand her feelings and was better able to articulate desire, as I show in subsequent paragraphs.

What is noteworthy regarding the letter to Anne Barkly is Betty's search for a mother figure or surrogate mother. Other letters to Anne reveal that Betty grew attached to her and viewed her as a kind of mother figure, something she searched for throughout her young life. One could perhaps also argue that Betty's attraction to Gertrude was the result of her search for a surrogate mother, but I will return to this interpretation once I have discussed Betty's relationship with Sarah Hall and Alice Greene and examined Betty's journals of the time as well as the correspondence between her and these two women.

In "Homoerotic Friendship and College Principals, 1880-1960" Elizabeth Edwards conducts a case study of several late nineteenth and twentieth-century writings by female school principals from England who had relationships with other women. She examines the homoerotic nature and power dynamics of their 'friendships'. Edwards' research finds that female principals who had relationships with other women *always* engaged in homoerotic friendships with women of their own class and profession (for the sake of secrecy), and unlike other lesbian cultures, formed their own distinct sub-culture of lesbianism in history (160-161). Significant for my subsequent analysis is Edwards' finding that these homoerotic relationships almost invariably consisted of love triangles. According to Edwards, one woman would be dominant, and two others would vie for her affection. Edwards argues that the power dynamics in these homoerotic friendships mimicked the power dynamics of heterosexual relationships in that one woman was the 'dominant' partner and that the other two women usually fulfilled the submissive roles or became proverbial 'wives'. Furthermore, her reading of these female principals' (and teachers') life writing reveals their struggle to express their love or describe their sexual feelings during the nineteenth century before sexologists introduced a vocabulary in their research, a point I return to in following paragraphs.

What is also important to note at this juncture before continuing my discussion of Betty's sexuality, is Sharon Marcus' assertion that nineteenth-century relationships between women (mothers, daughters, teachers, governesses, friends and partners) were often of a homoerotic nature. Apparently, female homoeroticism was commonplace in Victorian society. Furthermore, female homoeroticism was, according to Marcus, socially constructed, if not encouraged, through fashion

magazines, corporal punishment, and in children's literature about dolls in Victorian England. In *Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England* (2007) she states:

> Victorian commodity culture incited an erotic appetite for femininity in women, framed spectacular images of women for a female gaze, and prompted women's fantasies about dominating a woman or submitting to one. Victorian society accepted female homoeroticism as a component of respectable womanhood and encouraged women and girls to desire, scrutinize, and handle simulacra of alluring femininity. (112)

In the following paragraphs I demonstrate, by analysing Betty's writing (her journals from 1884-1889), that she became Sarah Hall's – the woman she loved after Gertrude – subordinate, was entranced by Sarah, and subjected herself to Sarah's will and wishes. As my analysis of Betty and Alice's life writing shows (Betty's journals and their correspondence), Betty's love for Sarah was akin to godly devotion; her writing reveals an intense desire to be dominated by the object of her affection. Betty (aged 30) met Sarah in 1883, as I have mentioned, while they were both travelling to England, Betty to study and Sarah to recruit teachers for the Young Ladies' Seminary at Graaff-Reinet. In a letter to her brother Frank, Betty mentioned that she met Sarah "on board" and that she hoped Sarah would "help" her come to terms with herself. She told Frank Sarah was "nice […] a poor word to describe her", and that he "would like her very much – ".[50] Betty gave up her studies at Newnham to join Sarah in Graaf-Reinet. As mentioned before, the two women then left for the Collegiate School in Port Elizabeth where Alice Greene was also a teacher. A triangle formed at Collegiate School. From Betty's journals and later Betty's and Alice's correspondence, it emerges that Sarah pursued a relationship with both Betty and Alice. Betty suffered a mental breakdown and had to return to recuperate in the care of her family in Cape Town. From what I have been able to determine, Sarah then decided to abandon her relationship with Alice as Betty managed to outmanoeuvre Alice for Sarah's affection (maybe by suffering her illness). I illustrate through my analysis that Betty became the 'dominant' woman and Alice the submissive partner in their relationship after Sarah's death. Furthermore, I discuss a curious development in Betty and Alice's relationship: how the 'ghost' or the memory of Sarah and Betty's relationship infused the correspondence between Betty and Alice, so much so that Betty and Sarah were described as 'mothers' to Alice, their so-called 'child'.

[50] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 64. 1 November 1883.

Before continuing with my analysis of the power dynamics between Betty and Sarah, I must first describe Betty's journal writing practices as a younger woman. Betty, as a woman of approximately 25 years old (in 1878), wrote what can be described as "prayer journals". Indeed, Catherine Corder, while researching the Molteno-Murray collection (including Betty's papers), labelled some of Betty's journals (number 2 and 4) as "prayer journals" or "prayer/journal" (see figure 4).

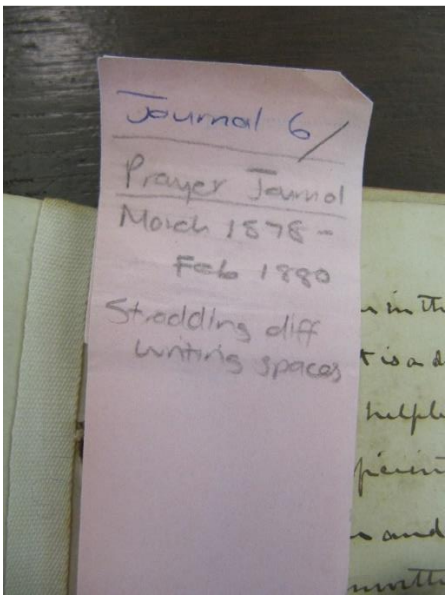

Figure 4 Image of Catherine Corder's notes

In these journals, Betty addressed God directly and some entries begin with the words "Our Father".[51] In a combination of the epistolary and diary writing traditions, she spoke to God about her sins, "faults" as she termed them, and reflected on the Bible and its teachings. She wrote about things that troubled her and implored God to help her overcome what she considered as shortcomings in herself.[52] During her youth, Betty attended the "English Church"[53] in Cape Town, presumably the Anglican Church of England.[54] In her diary, Caroline explained that their mother was a Protestant and attended the Dutch Church. J.C. Molteno was brought up Catholic. However,

[51] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 2. 16 September 1877.
[52] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 4. 21 September 1876.
[53] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 25 January 1869. p. 25.
[54] Caroline mentions Bishop Gray in her diaries. I traced the history of the Anglican Church in South Africa to locate the Bishop and confirm their religious upbringing and convictions. According to Herbert Hammond Robert, Gray was the first appointed Anglican Bishop of the Church of England based in Cape Town (252). The dates of Gray's appointment coincide with Caroline's mention of him.

Caroline and Betty decided to be confirmed as Anglicans.[55] The Anglican Bishop Gray was apparently authoritarian and imposed an "Anglo-Catholic pattern" (Hammond 252) on the church and congregation. The religious elements in Betty's writing would be especially intriguing for scholars of religious studies as one can discern the influences of both Protestant and Catholic denominations/values on her religious views and on her perception of her relationship with God. The following entries were written, as far as I have been able to determine, while Betty was convalescing in Cape Town with the family after her breakdown following Sarah's infidelity. In the correspondence between Betty and Alice Greene written in 1889 (transcribed by John Barham), both parties hinted at these events that transpired early in 1888 (the date of the following excerpt). At the time, Sarah started favouring Alice (Barham 613-614). She invited Alice to accompany her on her travels, shared confidences with her, and proclaimed her love to her. It is clear from the correspondence that Sarah was aware that Alice was besotted with her and nurtured relationships with both women. Although the following extracts from Betty's journals were not labelled as "prayer journals", they are similar in tone and style. In these journal entries, Betty pleaded with God to assist her with her struggles with Sarah, described as the one "who is [her] life":

> April 11th 1888 – Does the great God the Father of all creation, look down lovingly upon his creatures? Last night I was racked, confused, tormented – Every nerve in my poor body quivering – tortured beyond the last point of endurance _____ And thus O God – the wild, mad agony – O God if it was as punishment for sin that I am indulging in look down O infinitely loving God [me? – flood?] with light my soul that I may see the sin – [sin/fire ?] mighty strength to tear up the sin [...] the [...] sin it no place in my soul – But then my God I must change myself – this highly ..... how can I part with it & live! While I have it must I not be open to agonising suffering. But, oh my God, it seems I cannot suffer alone. I must torture her who is my life. It seems to me that I would gladly lay down my life for her – & yet so often I bring to her pain, & suffering, & bitterest disappointment.[56]

Immediately apparent from the excerpt is that Betty was distraught when she wrote this entry, and that despite her unhappiness Betty did not blame Sarah for her heartache. The excerpt appears to have been written in an excited, furious state where emotions just spilled onto the pages. Betty described this state and mentioned that she was "racked, confused, tormented – [e]very nerve in

[55] C. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 105. 25 January 1869. p. 25
[56] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 7. 11 April 1888. This is an example of where I struggled to read and accurately transcribe Betty's handwriting. I have indicated where I struggled to decipher her writing.

[her] poor body quiver[ed]", that she experienced "wild, mad agony" possibly as "punishment for sin that [she was] indulging in". It sounds when read aloud like a prayer of someone in considerable pain. Betty, however, appeared to "suffer" primarily because she was causing "her who is [her] life", Sarah, suffering or "torture". Betty stated that she brought Sarah "pain, & suffering, & bitterest disappointment". Betty's "I" at this stage demonstrates a degree of agency. She confessed to God her "sin" (which readers are not really privy to in this instance) and her desire to please Sarah, even going as far as to state that she must "change [her]self" and be "open to agonising suffering". Important in this excerpt though is that Betty *voiced* her desire and love for another woman. Whatever was 'indulged in', what her sin was, or for what she must suffer is not mentioned, and whether it was a physical or emotional transgression one can only guess. It should be mentioned here that I do not think the "sin" she is referring to in this instance is homosexuality. I illustrate further on that Betty and her partners never considered, in their life writing at least, that homosexuality was a sin, and that the sin she here referred to was anger directed at "her" Sarah.

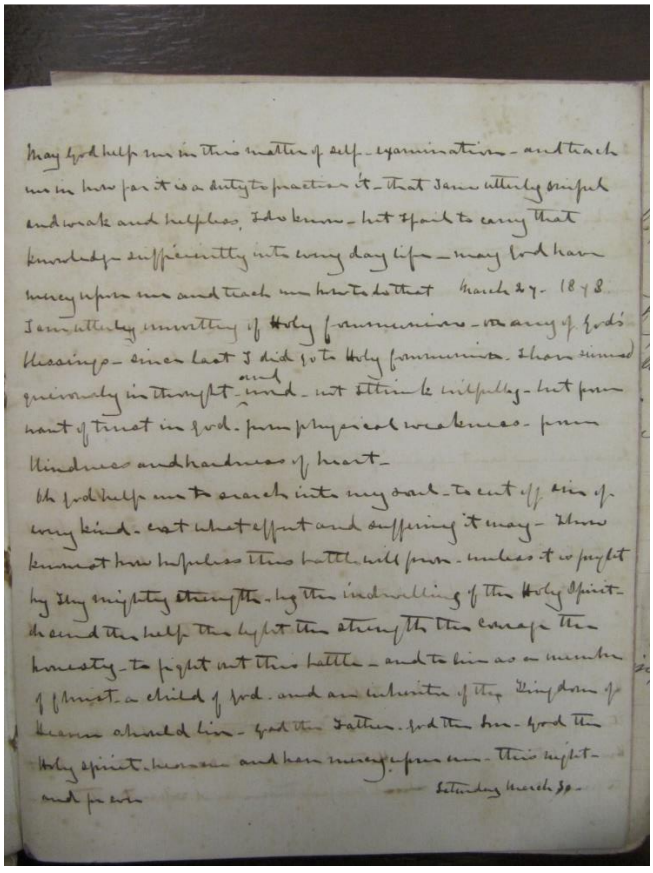

Figure 5 Sample of Betty Molteno's handwriting

Betty started keeping a diary in 1871 and she was meticulous in penning daily events. From 1880 onwards, however, this habit waned significantly. For example, she only used one journal to cover the period 1880-1889 and only a third of the available pages were used; the rest remained empty. The specific accounts cited below are excerpts taken from this journal but were written on separate pages, later placed inside this particular journal (either by Betty or the archivist of the collection, Dr Immelman). These reflections written on separate pages form a continuity. When read consecutively, they express Betty's angst, religious anxieties and devotion to Sarah. Betty wrote:

> April 12th 1888. O God fold her about with thy love – Thou knowest how I have poured out myself – my heart, my soul, all my [....] loving upon her – Thou knowest about it all, O my God, Bless her, bless her, Bless – if Blessing her, I must include taking me from her for a time then my God thy will must be done. Thy will is always [....] Only bless her, bless her, bless her, oh my God.[57]

The tone suggests a kind of rapture. Betty implored God to "bless" her beloved and stated that she had "poured" herself, her "heart" and "soul" onto the object of affection. The repetitions and exclamation indicate intense emotion and convey a sense of agitation. In the next day's entry, she wrote that she was "loving quite mad", that the love brought "agony", that she could not "bear it", and repeatedly begged God to "help" her.[58] The intensity of the emotions is yet again conveyed and shows how these caused Betty pain; agony that required divine intervention. The cadences inflected in the writing furthermore attest to a concentrated passion for her beloved. The sorrow appears to be caused, not by unrequited love, but rather by love itself. Betty presumably fell ill because she did not approve of Sarah's new love interest; yet, Betty's letters written to Alice the following year as well as her diary entries suggest that she found it impossible to reprimand or even blame Sarah for cultivating another love interest when they were together, although it deeply hurt her and affected her mental and physical health. In fact, her writing reveals that she felt ashamed that she was causing her partner 'pain' by being so 'selfish' as to want all her attention. In the following year, she wrote to Alice: "But I battled it out, and made up my mind I would try to worry her no more, either by trying to persuade her not to work so hard or by showing that it hurt me for her to see so much of you" (Barham 614). Marcus' assertion that many Victorian women desired to submit to other women's domination or fetishized dominating others comes to

[57] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 7. 12 April 1888.
[58] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 7. 13 April 1888.

mind since Betty appears to find satisfaction in her self-less and self-sacrificing love, a point I return to further on.

Betty's love for Sarah appears to have been akin to obsession. The transmission of Betty's emotions and devotion to Sarah in her life writing constructs an image of a woman worshipping her partner. After Sarah's death, Betty wrote the following:

> […] & that ideal is now indissolubly guided, & moulded, and controlled by her wishes and desires. I now see & understand so very much concerning her & her thoughts that was dark before. I know she asked of me to be, & to grow into the very best that it is possible for me to be in the space of life here that is still left me. How I live, what I am, what I aim at and accomplish, will be some [...index?...] to how I love her. Often and often have I said to myself, dying for her would be the easy thing, it is the living for her that is the hard thing, and so it is still. [59]

In Betty's life writing, a narrative of devotion and a willing, almost conscious subjugation to her partner develops. Betty described the process by which her life and choices had become a votive of deference and love. She was "guided", "moulded", "controlled" by another's "wishes and desires". Her own wishes and desires, what she "is" and how she "lives", then by extension, were supplanted by her partner's wishes. Betty and Sarah's relationship thus mimicked, partially, heterosexual partnerships or marriages of the time. During the nineteenth century, in both Britain and South Africa, it was commonplace or rather expected of women to devote themselves fully to their husbands and children. At this stage of her life when she was still younger, Betty emulated nineteenth-century heterosexual discourses that expected women to be selfless and privileged women's partners' wishes and ambitions above their own (Edwards 156-157). This internalisation of women's love as selfless manifested in her writing to the degree that she stated that she would easily give her life for her partner. Her 'life' apparently did not matter, but living in a way that satisfied and pleased Sarah became the ideal and Betty's challenge. Betty wrote in another entry, found on a single loose page placed inside a journal: "My Darling my Darling my Darling[.] What can I say more. I have poured out my soul upon you, and it is yours".[60] Betty's soul, a sacrosanct

[59] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 7. June 1889. I transcribed this section from loose pages inserted inside the journal cited here, but it appears to have been misfiled. These loose pages form part of a letter Betty wrote to Alice, and is transcribed, in full, by Barham (603-605).

[60] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 7. 1889. It is interesting to note that this sentiment, of having poured heart, soul and body into/onto another person, is also echoed by Greene, at first, by expressing her love and devotion for Sarah (Barham 607) and later to convey her regard for Betty (Barham 625-629).

part of her religious personhood, was bestowed upon another human and no longer sacred unto the Christian God she worshipped. Her "love" for Sarah was elevated to a position either on par with her love for God or even higher.

When Sarah became seriously ill in the early months of 1889, she and Betty travelled to England to consult with doctors but continued to recruit young teachers for Collegiate School. Her illness necessitated her to spend the last few weeks of her life with her brother and sister-in-law at their house in Clifton, England.[61] Betty wrote a lengthy account of these final days (April 25-27) she spent caring for Sarah. This document was filed in boxes containing Betty's correspondence with her family, but since these pages are not addressed to anyone and therefore have no discernible audience in mind, I infer that the content was likely penned from memory to describe a significant event that altered the course of her life. Sarah's death shattered Betty. The document reveals that their relationship was sexual and intimate, and that Sarah was in the position of power in this relationship:[62]

> [Thursday ...] Her dear face became all alive with feeling, and the joy of seeing me, which I dreaded for it was too much excitement for her. I sat down on an easy chair opposite her. Why don't you sit at the other side of the room she said, you are so cold, you have not even kissed me. Then I went and sat beside her and she tried to put her dear arms round me and fold me to her with the same all enfolding, enveloping, protecting, sheltering love and care that she always gave me after any parting, and she asked whether I had been afraid of hurting her. I said I was afraid my letters had been hurting her, she replied, as if your letters ever could hurt me. She began to talk eagerly about the school and said, you must go back, it will all come to smash if you do not. You need only go for six months, and then – and her face was all aglow again, and I know she meant then I may be well enough to return too. She told me she had been trying so hard to get well. I said you know what an uncertain head I have got, sometimes it works very well, and at other times it is of no use at all. She said she knew it, but I must take plenty of food, keep myself well in hand and make no great friendships. She made me read Miss Greene's and Miss Chambers' letters, the former she said I must read aloud skipping a certain part which she showed me, and when it was ended, she said, you see what a good, clear, reasonable, sensible letter she writes. Mrs Hall came in, I moved, she said I must bring my chair close to her, I took it to the back of the sofa and sat there. [...] She introduced me as the friend who had come with her from Africa, and knew all about

[61] Unfortunately, I could not source their names or identify the exact location of the place, Clifton, in England.

[62] A much shorter, amended and different version of this document is copied in a letter addressed to Alice (Barham 606). It appears that the original, possibly the version I am quoting from here, was written on board the *Garth* on 15 May 1889 while Betty was travelling back to South Africa.

> her illness. [...] I think she was tired then, & that I scarcely spoke to her, but that evening she said I should so dearly like to have you to sleep with me & when Mrs Hall was writing to Mrs. [...] asked if there were any message, she said tell her Miss Molteno is with me & that does me more good than anything else. She told me they all said it was not good for her to have me & that when she said I was coming Nurse said she was sorry for her sake. Also that she had said when she first read my note that she was sorry I was coming. Perhaps it was best so. She had me in my letters, & in a way that would not have been possible had I been close beside her. Our love was not of a day, & it may be that these few weeks separation were a merciful prelude to the separation of God's own doing that was hanging over us. My soul & spirit were round her all the while & she must have known & felt it.
>
> Friday. [...] She often liked to lie still with my hand in hers. Her legs sometimes felt restless & the skin irritable. I rubbed them & she said your touch is so different from everyone else's. [...] But I had scarcely begun to sew when she wanted me beside her. Her feet felt uncomfortable, & I took off her stockings & began to rub them. She heard someone at the door, & called out You can't come in, then recognizing the Doctor's voice said Oh you of course may come in. [...]
>
> Saturday. [...] When I was doing something for her at the table she said, come here, don't waste precious time. I sat holding her hand, she dozed a long while. She let me give her medicine & do everything for her.[63]

What emerges from Betty's diaries as well as the correspondence between her and Alice (analysed hereafter), is that Alice too was in love with Sarah and that the latter cultivated these feelings. After Sarah's death, once Betty had returned to Collegiate and became principal (as Sarah wished), Betty and Alice became lovers. Sarah was thus the object of both these women's affection. It is interesting that Sarah asked Betty not to read a section of Alice's letter which leaves one with the question: what was Betty not supposed to see? It was, however, Betty who won Sarah's favour (evidenced in the correspondence between Molteno and Greene (Barham 603-629)). Sarah explicitly told Betty to "make no great friendships". She was seemingly jealous of her partner's affection. In the first "intimate letter" (Barham 603) to Alice later that year, Betty stated: "[Sarah] used to say I was all hers and that she wanted, and needed every bit of me, and that I had no right to give any of myself to any one [*sic*] without her consent" (Barham 603). It appears that Sarah, although revered by both Betty and Alice, was controlling and jealous. Betty required "consent" from Sarah to even converse with others. She later wrote: "You know she allowed me no freedom of choice as regards friendships, and that law must be absolutely obeyed now and in no sham way" (Barham 611). Sarah lay down "law[s]" in her relationship with Betty, she dominated and

[63] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 64. 1889.

controlled her. It also seems from the correspondence between Betty and Alice that both felt as though they did not deserve Sarah's love, that they were inferior to her, and mentioned that she noticed and spoke of their "shortcomings" and "faults" (Barham 603). Is it possible that Sarah fostered these feelings of inadequacy in the other two women to control them?

Nevertheless, the almost tangible intimacy that existed between Sarah and Betty is revealed in the above extract. They loved each other, touched each other intimately, slept together and were passionate about their affection. Furthermore, they felt that they had to conceal their 'friendship' from others. Betty was introduced as a 'friend from Africa', Sarah's family was not pleased that she came to visit her sick friend and tried to keep them apart, but Sarah requested her presence and even asked that Betty should sleep with her. Betty stated: "She had me in my letters, & in a way that would not have been possible had I been close beside her. Our love was not of a day". Although difficult to be intimate in public and even private settings, these women expressed their ardent affection through letters, thus tangible objects, and "had" each other that way. Whereas Betty could not find adequate expression through words as a young girl, at this stage in her life the correspondence (thus, discourse) between her and Sarah appeared to be even *more* intimate than physically being together. Furthermore, Sara Ahmed explains that "[l]esbian desires create spaces, often temporary spaces that come and go with the coming and going of the bodies that inhabit them" (564). When no one was in the room, Betty could kiss and intimately touch her beloved; without the presence of others, a 'space' of desire and intimacy existed. I return to Betty's embodied subjectivity and experience of the body, desire and its relation to her religion in the following section.

In a letter written to Gertrude (10th March 1890), Betty's first love, Betty expressed the following:

> But dont [*sic*] you know and cannot you understand, that I have only fully awakened, and in many ways really live, since Miss Hall gathered me into her heart, and loved me as no one else did, or can. Cannot you feel that I am hers by rights of God's own making through her He has poured into me strength, & power, & steadiness of purpose – that through her He has fed my heart, & made my whole being blossom out, & expand, as [...] it never could have done & that now I am hers [...] But, dear Miss Hull, she bid me work, she said I must do a very great deal of work, and, in my own way, I am trying to do it. To love people as I have loved in the past can never come again. I have emptied my heart into hers. I love people still,

> for unless I love I must die, but I do not love as I used to love. I suppose one's love can show by working for people.[64]

The letter discloses that Sarah had a profound influence on Betty, that Betty elevated their relationship to regions of divinity and that the loss of Sarah was a devastating and shattering experience. Furthermore, Betty expressed the love she felt for Sarah to Gertrude, possibly because they had spoken about Betty's sexuality before, a point that was not evident from Caroline's youth diaries and begs the question: is the opacity regarding Betty's sexuality during youth a result of Caroline's journals and Caroline's inability to 'speak' of it in language, or was it Betty who was unable to explain it to Caroline, since the letter above conveys the impression that she freely voiced her love and sexuality to Gertrude later in life? The most salient factor in Betty's letters and journals is that lesbianism *was* and could be *spoken* in a nineteenth-century South African context, especially among lesbians themselves. Although it appears from the extracts above that Betty and Sarah concealed the sexual aspect of their relationship from others, they nevertheless managed to cultivate and express love for each other despite societal restrictions and impositions.

One could ask: what were the societal restrictions and impositions pertaining to lesbianism in the nineteenth century in South Africa? Apart from Sarah's and later Betty's description of their love affairs as 'great friendships' and Emily Hobhouse's reference to lesbians as 'bachelor women', I have not found any evidence to suggest that lesbianism and lesbians were termed such in South Africa at the time, although there must have been ways of referring to two women in a close/sexual relationship. Furthermore, the extracts above indicate that Sarah and Betty obscured the exact nature of their relationship from Sarah's family members, but as my reading of Betty's larger archive suggests, she did not specifically shelter her relationships from her family members. I have demonstrated that family members, such as Caroline, were aware of her close relationships with other women. Whether they knew of the sexual nature remains unclear. Mostly, it appears to me that at least some of Betty's siblings must have assumed there was more to her friendships and cohabitation with other women than mere convenience or companionship.

Returning to the letter Betty wrote to Gertrude, she noted that the "love" Sarah gave her empowered her. More pertinently, she wrote that God gave her "strength, & power, & steadiness of purpose" but that this happened "through her", or Sarah. Again, readers can see the discourse

[64] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 64. 10 March 1890.

of devotion and the conflation of divinity with Betty's expressions of love for other women. Her youthful, mostly voiceless "I" later morphed into an "I" that could speak and express love. However, despite her growth and the "I"'s ability to voice subjective desires and emotions, her "I" with Sarah demonstrates her willingness to sublimate any desire to accommodate another. Her utter devotion to another, at the cost of her own autonomy and well-being, is evidence of her willingness to sacrifice herself for love. Sarah's criticisms of her character also fostered severe anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. The subjection to another's wishes and desires, although arguably admirable and a conscious choice, is a reminder of the position of so many nineteenth-century women who subjected their will to those of their male partners. It thus appears that Betty endorsed discourses of female 'selflessness' towards a partner, even mimicking the power dynamics inherent in hegemonic heterosexual discourses, and subjugated her private desires to those of a partner. Finally, the discourse Betty created to speak her desire borrowed from religion.

The shift from submissive and devoted partner in Betty's relationship with Sarah to one of power in her relationship with Alice, is both intriguing and informative. For brevity's sake, I summarise the letters transcribed by Barham (603-629) from the onset of Betty and Alice's relationship to provide context for my subsequent analysis.

After Sarah's death in June 1899, Betty and Alice started corresponding to address the logistical issues around Betty's succession as principal of Collegiate. They agreed that their methods of teaching and learning would "continue" (605) Sarah's vision and would hopefully satisfy her (in death at least). Sarah bid both remain at their posts and continue her work. Through the course of the correspondence it is revealed and confirmed by both parties that Sarah loved them both, but that she eventually committed herself to Betty after the pain she caused her by spending too much time with Alice (604). Betty and Alice tentatively suggested that they might, by coming together, fill the emptiness in their hearts after their shared loss (which they possibly could not discuss in detail with relatives or friends). Both agreed to this suggestion, but each voiced some misgivings which were then summarily dismissed by the recipient, and finally they met up in person to discuss their new special partnership. Interesting textual and psychological dynamics unfold gradually and systematically in these letters. Alice started to refer to Betty and Sarah (although Sarah was already deceased) as "Mother" (Barham 621-629) and 'dear Mothers'. Both Alice and Betty wrote as though Sarah was still alive and, in some instances, Alice and Betty appear to merge the memory

of Sarah with Betty by collectively referring to her/them as 'Mothers'. Betty also spoke not only for herself, but also on behalf of Sarah and "they" (Betty and the 'spectre' of Sarah) then began to refer to Alice as their "dear Child" (618). Alice and Betty convinced themselves that their "union" (609) was the will of Sarah (618), which probably required mental acrobatics and an incredible stretch of the imagination, given Sarah's possessive nature while alive. Their relationship developed as a kind of tribute to the memory of the woman they had lost. Through being with Betty, Alice said she felt as though she connected with Sarah and God (618; 629). Sarah and Betty (as was the case with Betty in the previous relationship) acted as intermediaries with God. Before continuing with my analysis of their writing and what it reveals about their relationship, it should be mentioned that their relationship of almost thirty years did not remain as originally conceived. As the years progressed, it changed significantly to resemble something like a modern-day partnership.

Although there are numerous interesting and noteworthy elements in the written accounts about Betty and Alice's relationship, I focus on three issues: what the letters reveal about Betty's shift towards an authoritative power position, how Alice's "hero worship" (100) of Sarah and Betty was narrated even to the extent that they became intermediaries with God, and the significance of the Mother/Daughter trope.

Betty wrote the following letter to Alice (August 12th 1889) after they met in Port Elizabeth to discuss the nature of their relationship. Betty outlined the rules of their engagement almost as a kind of contract:

> Now for the rules. Not only the children are to have rules to keep. That scarcely seems fair play.
>
> I No going into each other's rooms, except on necessary business.
>
> II Only one goodnight kiss downstairs before we go to bed.
>
> III On Friday nights, after nine, you belong to me entirely until the next morning, & are to come and sleep with me.
>
> IV If you want me badly you can come to me any afternoon, or evening, for quarter of an hour, but just to be still, there is to be no talking at all until Friday.
>
> V We must try to make notes of anything that requires talking over & discuss such business on Wednesday afternoons.

> These rules are open to discussion & it will depend on you as to whether they are to become binding or not.
>
> You have full power to order me off your bed at any time if you think I am getting a little silly, and the sleep debt accumulating too much. You must not want to know all I am thinking and feeling, not about the scribbling. (Barham 619-620)

Betty, in a similar fashion to the laws Sarah lay down regarding her actions in their relationship, now crafted "rules" for both her and Alice to obey. Her 'rule' in the relationship appears more benign than Sarah's, seeing as these rules are "open for discussion", for the sake of "fair play" and because Alice could decide whether they would "become binding or not". These rules, dictating the nature of their intimacy and allocating timeslots for passionate engagements, appear to have been measures put in place to protect both parties from detection and public scrutiny. This again calls to mind Edwards' assertion mentioned earlier that "[p]rincipals' friendships, unlike many other lesbian relationships, were *always* with members of their own social class" (my emphasis 160). However, there are two elements to Betty's rule that stand out: a willingness to defer to her partner in some aspects but managed from her position of power. She wrote to Alice that she wanted her to have her "own opinion", to never "give it up nor change it unless [her] judgement [was] fully convinced", that the "[s]weet child" had "power" because if Alice was in pain, Betty would "at once [want] to comfort [her] and take all pain" from her (619). Regardless of Betty's expressed wish that Alice maintain autonomy of her thoughts and judgments, the inherent power dynamics characteristic of the roles of "mother" and "child" (discussed in more detail later) in her writing to some measure negates the notion of the "power" of the child. The power Alice, or rather 'the child' had, was to cry out in pain already caused and to seek comfort, and not necessarily the requisite authority to facilitate a conversation that would lead to avoiding pain (I return to this last point). For example, Betty's overtly sexual tongue-in-cheek remark that Alice could "order" her off the bed to attend to accumulated "sleep debt" is followed by a non-negotiable statement that Alice "must not want to know" all of Betty's thoughts, feelings or what she was writing about. One cannot help but wonder: what would Betty be writing that was so private not even her partner could read it or ask about its contents?

In a letter written by Alice to Betty in December 1892, it is revealed that Betty (like Sarah) "took [her school child] into [her] bed" (Barham presumes it was another teacher at Collegiate, 627). From the tone and content of the letter, it is clear that Alice suffered greatly because of this and

wrote the following after Betty asked "consent" to be with the other 'school child': "I felt as I suppose a wife would feel if she allowed her husband to take a mistress" (627). Alice also struggled (as Betty did in the case of Sarah) to blame her partner for perceived infidelity and took some of the blame herself when she stated that she had "failed [Betty]", "deliberately plunged" her into pain and anguish by "deceiv[ing her] trust", all because she did not want to share Betty with another woman/child. Alice further wrote: "Body, soul & spirit, all were yours. And the anguish was that you could take every bit of me like that, & yet have room for more, taken in just the same way. [...] You were my Lord & King. But I was only one of many to you. I was your child, but you hoped to have many more born to you". She ended this section by stating: "Was not my jealousy small & mean?" (627) One cannot help but notice the striking similarities to the original Sarah-Betty-Alice triangle and power struggle, but in this instance, Betty is the authority figure (mother) and Alice the submissive partner (child), with the other teacher the third person (child) in the relationship causing discord. Much like Betty used to worship her partner Sarah, Alice here became the convert and prayed at the feet of her "Lord & King". Alice wrote: "And in a sense I did in truth become your baby. My smallness became absorbed in your greatness until it seemed as if our souls did become one" (627). Alice perceived herself as 'small', or rather insignificant, next to Betty's 'greatness'. Of further importance is that although Alice and Betty relied on linguistic frameworks related to women, in the guise of mother/daughter relationships, to describe and understand their relationships, Alice still referred to Betty as Lord and King, signalling her understanding of a submissive relationship as gendered. Also, she endorsed, probably unconsciously, heteronormative patriarchal discourse to describe an authoritative partner as Lord and King, and not as Lady or Queen.

Alice's access to God and divinity, according to her, was through touching Betty and being with her. Communion with God happened in the space of physical intimacy between her and Betty:

> This is the worst of all. I do not know whether my darling realizes that even yet I have no living, real sense of God, that only very rarely I feel any need of Him, though I have a passionate longing to find Him. It almost seems as if I were too happy to pray. [...] But when I have you – then I do seem to realize God in my own fashion. Do you remember what you said in one of your letters: "Through each other we touch God, & He thrills our whole being." It is perfectly true. That is how I find God – when I touch you. I know no other way. (Barham 628-629)

Their relationship was relegated to the regions of divinity. Passion became 'godly'. When they "touch[ed]", their beings were "thrill[ed]" and they could realise God. This embodied experience of love, and by extension God, is noteworthy. In no way does either Betty or Alice narrate their 'taboo' intimacy in such a way that it might have been construed as wayward or sinful by the public or according to religious (Christian) convention of the time. In their written discourse and with their physical bodies, they permitted their love and actions and elevated it to the realm of 'divine passion'. The lesbian discourse they are creating in these letters, although peculiar in contemporary understanding, sheds light on the ways in which women managed to find language that could assign meaning to their acts of loving. It is fascinating that they relied so heavily on religious discourses to write about their experiences of love for one another.

Understandably, contemporary readers would find the sexual nature of the language used by 'mother' and 'daughter' distinctly odd, even disturbing. Overtly sexual comments made while speaking in the guise of mother and daughter occurred throughout the early correspondence between Betty and Alice. For example, Alice wrote to Betty: "In very truth I have become again as a *little child* & *my Mother's breast* is all the world to me – warmth & food & blessings & shelter & strength" (Barham 623, my emphasis). Betty equally embodied the mother/daughter discourse in her writing and wrote the following: "I should like to say that you are *to us our dear dearest child* and the truest of friends [...] I cannot refuse your devotion, and through me to her" (616, my emphasis). However, this was not an uncommon phenomenon between lesbians in the nineteenth century (Reay 224). Referring to a loved one as mother/daughter was not a limited form of expressing affection between lesbians only, but between Victorian women as well. Alice, for example, called her sister Helen "[m]y darling child" (Barham 103). Marcus argues convincingly that "Victorians did not see social bonds between women as distinct from or antithetical to familial and marital ones" and that her research of women's fashion magazines, pornography and doll literature "has shown that women's status as sexual objects for men did not preclude their erotic interest in and for other women. Like the father-daughter relationship, the mother-daughter bond became a template for desire that could prefigure marital ties and overlap with the everyday homoeroticism of commodity culture" (166). Marcus further asserts that many Victorians "did not see desire between women as imitative or secondary; because Victorians did not define lesbianism as an autonomous identity, they were not concerned that female homoeroticism might lead women to disclaim sexual relationships with men" (166). A mother-daughter relationship, in many ways,

other than sexual, symbolises love between women and could partially explain why Betty and Alice decided to use this familial form of address in their relationship. With reference to Marcus' findings (160-166), one could argue that many discourses around mother/daughter relationships in the nineteenth century were influenced by homoerotic discourses and therefore might even have been a natural choice for Betty and Alice. There is also an established and natural hierarchy in understandings regarding motherhood that might have appealed to these two lesbian women: the mother as a being with authority, whose rule is benign and who chides a child in a loving manner. The sexual elements brought into the correspondence between 'mother' and 'child', however, does not sit comfortably with a contemporary reader. For example, Alice's description of sitting at her mother's breast (mentioned in the extract above) was written after their sexual relationship began. "Breast" in this instance was thus not innocent and reads more like innuendo.

The symbolic image of motherhood in Victorian England and its colonies was one of moral and racial superiority. Feminists appropriated these discourses of 'women as powerful' to enter imperial public spaces and industry (Cohler xii-xiii). I propose that Betty's choice of calling herself Mother (a point I return to in the following section) signals an intent to female empowerment. Betty and Alice's choice of motherhood and daughterhood, rather than 'husband' and 'wife', or 'wives', resists heterosexual and heteronormative categories of sexual desire (though in their actions they might have emulated these discourses). The lesbian discourse they created appropriated the feminist notion of agentive imperial motherhood and rejected patriarchal and heterosexual categories or "compulsory heteroimperial masculinity" (Goswani qtd. in Smith and Watson *Reading* 54). The "mother" is thus hailed as "Lord & King", not the father. Arguably, this feminine discourse was a conscious and privately political choice. Betty, Sarah and Alice all voiced their desire for each other. Considering my statement about Betty's attraction to her school teacher, Gertrude, as a kind of surrogate mother, I would add here that it does not seem farfetched. I suggest that Betty's own deteriorating and troubled relationship with her mother prompted her to try and find an authoritative female figure (in both Anne Barkly, Gertrude and Sarah) in whom she could confide and whom she could love. The possible homoeroticism between women, especially mothers and daughters, during the nineteenth century, perhaps facilitated this kind of search for a sexual mother figure. I do not think Betty anticipated falling in love with Gertrude, but did, and as can be seen in her relationships with both Sarah and Alice, she was not averse to constructing 'familial units' within frameworks of desire. Betty's subjectivity at first was informed by

discourses that could not name her desire. She then proceeded with her partners to construct their own referential language framework, borrowing from their religion and the familial relationship between mother and daughter, which enabled Betty to express her sexual subjectivity.

In this section my aim was to analyse Betty, her sister and her partners' life writing to discuss Betty's sexual subjectivity and to examine the creation of a lesbian discourse in nineteenth-century South Africa by Betty and her partners. I determined that lesbianism *was* and could be *spoken*, and although mostly invisible in public society and discourses, was articulated in at least four women's private life writing of the nineteenth century. The nineteenth-century discourse they created mimicked in language and power dynamics the discourses around heterosexual relationships of the nineteenth century. Their relational experience of God while being with their partners was also an important part of this discourse. Finally, the mother/daughter trope employed by Betty and Alice to define their relationship illustrates their wish to locate their desire in female discourses. I continue my discussion of notions of motherhood in Betty's life in the next two sections. Concluding this section, I assert that sexuality significantly shaped Betty's subjectivity. The degree to which sexuality shaped Betty's subjectivity is further discussed in the conclusion of this chapter.

Embodiment and Religion in Betty Molteno's Journals

The previous section of this chapter painted a portrait of Molteno, partially at least, as a rather neurotic and tempestuous character who would gladly martyr herself for love. To some degree, this would not be a misrepresentation of Molteno as a young girl and to a certain extent as a young woman in her thirties. But by the time Molteno reached the age of forty she became an outspoken activist and defender of human rights and seemingly no longer suffered from the illnesses that plagued her younger years. As mentioned in the previous section, Molteno was raised Anglican, but Mr Gray's teachings relied heavily on Catholicism. Yet, as a septuagenarian, Molteno converted to the Mazdaznan religion (which I discuss in detail further on). Structurally then, this section of the chapter addresses two separate yet related aspects of Molteno's subjectivity: her gendered embodied position (and to a lesser degree her relational subjectivity) and her religious convictions. Mostly, this section of the chapter relies on the detailed journals (1920-1927) Molteno kept while living on Hampstead Heath in London. Molteno had Miss O'D (as she called her in her

journals) type the journals during the final decade of her life. The typist Miss O'D (paid for by Molteno's brother Percy) would type multiple copies of her handwritten journals and poetry, and I assume Molteno (but it might have been the typist) bound them together and then sent copies to her family members living all over the globe (see figure 6). Thus, although I think the journals I analysed in the previous section were private, these journals I turn to now in my analysis, though clearly still marked by the characteristics of the genre, were intended to be read by her family (and maybe other acquaintances). I also quote from a letter Molteno wrote to her brother Charlie and add an excerpt written by pastor C.F. Andrews about Molteno.

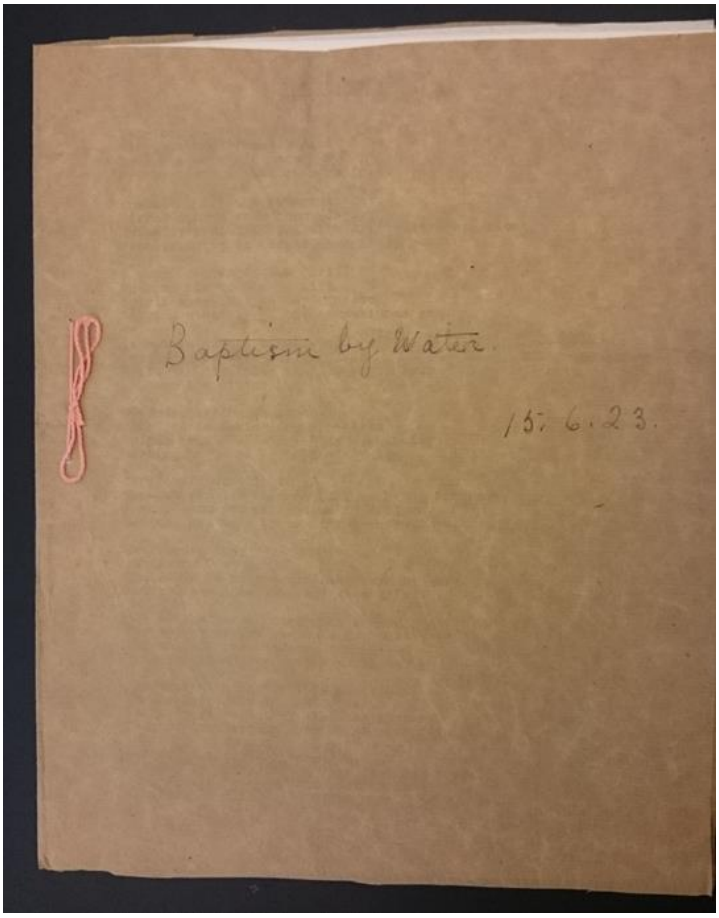

Figure 6 Example of Betty Molteno's bound poetry

According to Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson "[i]t is easy to think that subjectivity and life writing have little to do with the material body. But the body is a site of autobiographical knowledge because memory itself is embodied. And life narrative is a site of embodied knowledge (a textual surface on which a person's experience is inscribed) because autobiographical narrators are embodied subjects" (*Reading* 49). As discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis, I regard female subjectivity as relational and embodied. I also expressed my intention to examine subjectivity through the lens of life writing. In women's writing, especially in the period under discussion, women's "I"s were generally mediated and established through others and can noticeably be seen or examined through "relationality" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 248). Although not explicitly mentioned in the previous section, the discussion about Molteno's sexuality also revealed aspects of her embodied and relational subjectivity: for example, her conversations with God in a private prayer journal illustrate a relational (as well as confessional

and therapeutic) practice of making sense of the "I"'s emotions, troubles and everyday doings in conversation with an other. The discussions of her passions and intimacy with her partners were also embodied, both physically and textually. Considering Molteno's life writing, I illustrate in this chapter that her relationship with her body was ambiguous (at least textually) and that she penned confused texts about her body and her experience of it. I argue that the muddled writing was due to remnants of Enlightenment thought and that she *mostly* enforced the Cartesian binary of 'mind' and 'body' as separate and unrelated entities. Yet, as I illustrate from her writing, in other instances she presented an image of an embodied "soul" (as I think she understood subjectivity as influenced by religious perspectives) or embodied "I", which I then suggest was clearly influenced by her conversion to the Mazdaznan religion. I propose in this section that her religious and later mystic beliefs (as well as Enlightenment thought) caused a change in her perception of mind and body as separate (or body and soul/spirit – as Molteno describes it). Despite the stark mind/body dichotomy expressed in texts earlier in her life, her subjectivity was embodied and relational, as I illustrate further on.

I will discuss Molteno's 'illness' as portrayed in her and Caroline's life writing; also the ways in which her anxieties, her fears, manifested in the form of so-called 'female hysteria', which affected her living body. This discussion illuminates her embodied subjectivity when younger. Nineteenth-century female illness is a documented phenomenon of women's lives, present both in published and unpublished writings and evident in the portrayal of fictional characters of the time (Driver 454-457; Gilbert and Gubar 1979). As already mentioned in the previous section, Molteno suffered regular bouts of so-called melancholia, became hysterical on occasion, was anxious, and regularly complained of headaches, but as far as I can tell from reading sections of her writing, this did not occur regularly past her middle years. I suggested in the previous section that this was partly due to her inability to express or explain her sexual desire for other women, but as Dorothy Driver, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar suggest, anxieties and/or anger towards gendered society constructed by men at times manifested as illness in women during the nineteenth century. It is thus not a singular issue and should not be attributed to one factor only but to a purl of reasons and circumstances (on which I do not speculate any further).

Apart from Caroline's sketches of Molteno's tantrums and illness during her youth, Molteno also regularly wrote about her headaches in her youth journals.[65] Her journals at times almost read like a tabulated record of all her headaches and other ailments. It is significant though that she regularly suffered from migraines and then had to stay in bed for most of the day. Although her health and headaches appear to have improved after becoming more involved in public life through teaching, after finding lovers and forming unions with other women, she still suffered occasional bouts of sickness and even mental breakdowns. An example would be Molteno's illness in 1888 after Sarah formed an intimate relationship with Alice. Molteno's statement to Sarah that she had an "uncertain head [...], sometimes it work[ed] very well, and at other times it [was] of no use at all" indicates that even though she had employment and was in a loving relationship, she still periodically suffered from what can be categorised as mental instability. One cannot help but think that Molteno's bodily ills were psychosomatic, because her physical illness and debilitating headaches almost exclusively emerged when she was strained emotionally. Her emotions seem to have influenced her physical body. As a younger woman, Molteno continually referred to her body in her life writing. The body and its physical state were mentioned with as much frequency as Molteno's mental state. She was therefore conscious of her body and emphasised and referred to it regularly. Since subjectivity is constituted by a subject's environment and experience, Molteno's subjectivity was thus formed in response to her embodied experiences. One could even say that her bodily experiences were equally influenced by Molteno's subjectivity, if one considers her physical reactions to external stimuli.

Molteno told C.F. Andrews in 1913, after a speech he delivered on behalf of Gandhi's Indian liberation movement, that she carried her history and the burdens of society in/on her body. Molteno's comment seems to confirm my assertion above that her body markedly impacted the formation of her subjectivity and vice versa. Andrews recalled:

> Miss Molteno met me after my sermon and began at once to upbraid me. I had not expected this from her, and wondered what was the reason. She had come she said with such longing to hear a message that should heal and unite the people of her country, but I had made division worse divided. I tried to defend myself, saying that all I had said was true. "Yes, yes", she said, shaking her hand impatiently. "Of course it's all true, every word of it, and I have lived to fight for the truth as you

[65] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 1, Journal 5. 12 December 1877, 12 January 1878 & 19 January 1878.

> call it all these years. *Look at the lines on my face! Have I not suffered for the truth?* But your sermon left me cold, cold, – cold and lifeless. Oh! why don't you preach to them as you did at St Aidan's? Isn't love true? Is not love the only the final truth? Oh! you don't know South Africa yet; you don't know it, as I know it, *after all these years of suffering*. How can you? Ah! there is cruelty and lust and pride and hate enough, at the surface, in English and Dutch and Indian and Kaffir alike, – in all of us. But there's love at the centre, there's love at the centre. And it's only love that's true and lasting. When you and I and all the rest of us are dead, love goes on, love goes on." I wish I could explain with what intensity of conviction she said these words, I could feel at once that she was right, with her pure woman's instinct, as she had been right before in her speech at [the Indian Community at Durban].[66] (my emphasis)

Molteno (according to Andrews at least, one still needs to bear in mind that the above is hearsay) equated the "lines" on her face, her "suffering" to lived experience. The body thus becomes the vessel of memory and showcases the "I"s history. She explained, according to Andrews, in speech, the relationship between circumstances and emotions' effect on the body. There is thus no clear separation in this incident between 'body' and 'soul' – the two are intertwined and reciprocal in their function. However, towards the end of Molteno's life, as the following extract from a letter shows, she clearly distinguished between the body and soul, although she acknowledged the interconnected nature of the 'two parts' of subjectivity.

Molteno wrote the following in a letter to her brother Charlie on 9 August 1923:

> What is the use of going on living? If I do not also go on growing and developing. What I am learning is that I must take more deliberate care of my body – knowing well that it is not me – but only a temporary garment that must be looked after and properly cared for if it is to be a useful instrument for me to use. Very late in life it is that I have learnt this lesson. I have been so determined that my body should not dominate me, nor prevent me from getting experiences that were necessary if I was to gain the freedom that one must have if certain work is to be done. My body was not to be a well fed, carefully groomed animal, wearing superb clothes; and fed with the finest foods. It must find its highest sources of life in free and continuous communion with Nature and in trying to develop the mental and spiritual side of myself; my body must help and not impede me. Of late there has come to me a new light on the body. Little have I learnt of its wonderful powers but I do know that the body is a marvellous complex and that it has capacities and possibilities undreamt of by the generality of human beings.[67]

[66] Found in Betty's papers, a typed manuscript with heading 'Extracts from the Writings of "C.F. Andrews, re Indian Affairs in S.Africa"', volume xvi, p.274: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. pp. 7-8.
[67] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 9 August 1923.

The distinction Molteno made between the body as "temporary garment" and the soul is clear in this extract and was most probably influenced by Christian teachings. Although Molteno described in detail the care she had decided to take of her body to "help" and not "impede" her, she clearly stated that the body "is not me". She thought of her soul (described as "me") as temporarily inhabiting the body and did not think of her body as *her*. She did however own the "capacities" and "possibilities undreamt of by the generality of human beings" and explained that the body is "a marvellous complex" thing. What caused these ambiguities and contradictions in her understanding of her body and relationship to it? At this stage of Molteno's life (71 years old) she had already converted to the Mazdaznan mystic religion, which emphasised the importance and care of the body; yet, Molteno's life writing indicates that although she had adopted these teachings she still had trouble shedding the Christian belief that body and soul are separate. My discussion further centres on Molteno's religious conversion but at this point I highlight Molteno's statement above concerning her earlier beliefs regarding her body's purpose and her relationship to her body: she stated that she did not groom the body, did not consume the "finest foods", did not dress it in "superb clothes". She stated that at first she had considered her body as an impediment to the work and experiences of her earlier years (probably because of its biological gender) but that her perspective had shifted and that she later regarded the body's "highest sources of life" to be its purpose to help her develop mentally and spiritually. Although her perspective was shifting, she *still* seemed ambivalent about Mazdaznan teachings concerning the body and *still* regarded the body as tool, and not integral to her understanding of the soul. Her earlier Christian convictions thus shimmered through her new beliefs. The perspective of the body thus changed from being an impediment to becoming a tool.

I will now first provide a short summary of the Mazdaznan religion and beliefs before continuing my analysis of the extract above within the context of Molteno's religious beliefs *and* her activism. The Mazdaznan philosophy centred on a "holistic" (Shukair 86) approach to, as Molteno described it, "develop the mental [and physical] and spiritual side" of humans to achieve personal enlightenment. Kathleen Shukair explains that the Mazdazans believed "that through integration of body, mind and spirit the individual can achieve her or his intellectual and creative potential" (86). The religion's founding father was German-American typographer Otto Hanisch (or later Dr Ha'nish). Founded in 1902, the religion spread across Europe, India and America (Shukair 86). Its

principles and rituals focused on breathing exercises, physical exercise, specific diets, rhythmic chanting and the betterment of one's physical and mental faculties. Juliana Smart writes:

> Historian Michael Stausberg found that while Mazdaznan claimed to be the authentic and original Zoroastrianism, the movement actually emphasized the more modern trends of hygiene, gender equality, vegetarianism, and eugenics. According to Stausberg, Ha'nish borrowed from Zoroastrian mythology, changing the name of the goddess Anahita to the Mazdaznan Ainyahita and claimed she was the "mother" and "patron" of the white race. Ha'nish used this ancient Zoroastrianism, combined with Christianity and modern New Thought, to create the doctrine of Mazdaznan. (40)

I find Molteno's attraction to this religion both congruent with and contradictory to her character. The word "Aryan" in Mazdaznan indicated the highest form of enlightenment a white man could reach during his life (Smart 9). Molteno was a spokesperson for the equality of all of humanity, irrespective of creed, race, religion or gender, as attested by her involvement with Gandhi and Dube's campaigns (Dube's opposition to the 1913 Land Act and Gandhi's satyagraha campaign) in South Africa for racial equality before the law and in society and her involvement later in women's rights campaigns (Corder and Plaut 53). She wrote, for example, to her sister Caroline in 1923 that:

> Fair play is a jewel little cherished in South Africa with regard to the people of colour. How can we force them to come into our scheme of civilisation and not permit them to forge for themselves any of the weapons without which they are quite defenceless against attacks of the unscrupulous, and truly uneducated class of our own white community.[68]

Even during Gandhi's busy campaign, Molteno extended her interests and "also attended public meetings and protests around the white railway workers' strike in Durban in the same period" (Corder and Plaut 24). During Gandhi's satyagraha campaign (or passive resistance) in 1913 Molteno (apart from making speeches, etc.) acted, in part, as mediator/intermediary between Gandhi and General Jan Smuts (the then Minister of Internal Affairs and Security). This role of intermediary was effected by sending missives and detailed information to Greene in Cape Town, who was caring for the ailing Emily Hobhouse at the time. Hobhouse, in turn, then wrote to "Oom Jannie" (Jan Smuts) on Gandhi's behalf and also wrote to Gandhi, offering advice and encouragement. Molteno was not alone in her endeavour to help Gandhi – she was assisted by

[68] E.M. Molteno: Letter to Caroline Murray. UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 17 May 1923. p. 1.

Olive Schreiner, Alice Greene and Emily Hobhouse, a "small circle within a broader group of Cape and European liberal women who shared a commitment to pacifism and human rights dating back to their experiences in the South African War" (Corder and Plaut 23). Molteno's actions during the Boer War (like those of Emily Hobhouse) and her involvement with the Conciliation Committee no doubt endeared her to the Boer leaders in government in later years. For example, shortly after the war in 1902 Molteno travelled with Generals Louis Botha, Koos de la Rey (and his wife) and Christiaan De Wet to England and kept a detailed diary of this voyage. As is evident from her entries, she deeply admired the Generals (and De la Rey's wife) and in turn was considered a friend and confidante by them. In a letter to Schreiner she noted that she found them "simple, natural, unassuming and unaffected people".[69] In her diary she described De la Rey as "a true gentleman",[70] noted that Botha spoke "well"[71] and that "contact with [De Wet was] very refreshing and invigorating".[72] Thus, after forming firm friendships with Boers in power, she was ideally suited to write to Botha on Gandhi's behalf during the latter's campaign. It is also through her doing that Hobhouse wrote to Smuts and apparently wielded significant influence over him and his ensuing decisions (Corder and Plaut 46). Even before Molteno travelled to join Gandhi she visited Prime Minister Botha in his Cape Town home to plead with him to recognise Indian marriage vows and ceremonies (Corder and Plaut 26-27). Later, she also wrote to him after having spoken to many Indian women who were imprisoned for resisting government legislation declaring their marriages invalid (Corder and Plaut 49). In my mind, one of Molteno's defining character traits was her ability to maintain friendships despite differences of opinion: for example, she still loved, admired and corresponded with Botha (and others) who did not agree with her more progressive politics. And, from what I could gather from her life writing, their reaction towards her was to treat her with the same respect, thoughtfulness and care. In 1926, for example, years after her 'disagreement' with Botha (I am not sure how much notice he took of her), she still wrote that she harboured "great admiration" for "Mrs Louis Botha" and respected the Bothas' marriage

[69] E.M. Molteno: Letter to Olive Schreiner copied in her diary. "Day to day Journal, Three Boer Generals on Board. R.M.S. Saxon". UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 5. 4 August 1902. p. 9.
[70] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 5, "Day to day Journal, Three Boer Generals on Board. R.M.S. Saxon". 4 August 1902. p. 6.
[71] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 5, Letter to Olive Schreiner copied in her diary, "Day to day Journal, Three Boer Generals on Board. R.M.S. Saxon". 4 August 1902. p. 9.
[72] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 5, "Day to day Journal, Three Boer Generals on Board. R.M.S. Saxon". 4 August 1902. p. 6.

of "romance" that lasted throughout their lives.[73] As will be illustrated in the following section by my analysis of a poem she wrote about Cecil John Rhodes, Molteno also had an incredible capacity for forgiveness.

Yet, what I find both confusing and troubling concerning Molteno's writing is that although I have not come across racist utterances in Molteno's earlier journals, she wrote a few years after her conversion to Mazdaznanism: "We all know that the world is in need of Saviours, and colour of their skins has to be according to the people they are helping – who then recognise that God loves black people as well as white ones – because God sometimes sends great souls into black bodies".[74] This statement appears to me outside of Molteno's character and earlier life writings. The focus of Mazdaznanism on eugenics and the superiority of the white race also seem at odds with Molteno's beliefs. Having read Molteno's detailed notes on the Mazdaznan teaching she received, I suspect that her teacher did not emphasise this part of Mazdaznan teaching to his/her students in London and that Molteno might have been unaware of these doctrines at first. It is equally possible that she did not consider these teachings racist in the early twentieth century. As it is, I do not have an explanation for Molteno's inconsistency in this instance and would feel uncomfortable to speculate. However, Mazdaznan's focus on vegetarianism, gender equality and hygiene would have attracted Molteno, who already lived according to these values. Smart writes:

> Dr. Ha'nish was quoted many times as saying that, 'No nation can rise above the level of its womanhood.' Possibly, this was why so many women were drawn to the religion; they sought respect, which they may not have found at home. Women may have believed that as mothers they would be held in higher respect in this religion (50).

The level of respect assigned to women in this religion would certainly have drawn Betty's attention. Futhermore, Mazdaznanism did not appear to displace the Christian principles or teaching dear to Molteno, but rather to add to it (Smart 48-49).

In the letter to Charlie quoted above, one clearly notices the significant influence Mazdaznan training had on Molteno in the last decade of her life. Her statement that she had "been so determined that [her] body should not dominate [her], nor prevent [her] from getting experiences that were necessary if [she] was to gain the freedom that one must have if certain work is to be

[73] E.M: Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 12 October 1926. p. 2.
[74] E.M: Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 12 October 1926. p. 2.

done" is especially interesting. This statement seemingly portrays notions of biological essentialism in its regard of the female body as limitation to access, "to gain the freedom" she required to do the work she wanted. Thus, Molteno's fear of the body "[dominating]" her reflects an internalisation of her society's perceptions of the female body and what a person might be permitted to do with such a body. Clearly, Molteno's writing indicates that she felt her body could "prevent" her access and social mobility. My suggestion here is thus that she had difficulty after her conversion to Mazdaznanism to rid herself of her ingrained or acquired perception – prescribed by society and enforced by Christian teachings – of the body as "temporary", separate from the soul, and that the female body was a burden that marked her as woman.

The persistence of distinguishing between the body and soul after Molteno's conversion is interesting. Firstly, her denunciation in her younger years of her body suggests the symbolic preference of mind over body. This action was clearly influenced by religious convictions but also by persistent Enlightenment philosophies still prevalent in her society. The Enlightenment subject was white, male, "[u]nique, unitary, unencumbered, [a] self [that] escape[d] all forms of embodiment" (Smith *Subjectivity* 5). Smith explains that women who aspired to a rational, disembodied unitary self was considered as "unwomanly, a kind of monstrous creature" (15). Furthermore, Smith clarifies that the universal subject "locate[d] man's selfhood somewhere between the ears, [and] it locate[d] woman's selfhood between her thighs" (12). Although logically women must have possessed developed subjectivities, society denied even the possibility that women were complex subjects, partly because, according to dominant thought of the Enlightenment that persisted into the nineteenth century, women's subjectivity could only be embodied and thus did not match the Universal "I". Furthermore, Christian religious teachings insisted on the division between body and soul. Religion, as I also further discuss, was integral to the development of Molteno's subjectivity and thus influenced her thoughts pertaining to her body.

Molteno, in her seventies, converted to a religion where one of the defining characteristics was the belief in the "Cosmic Mother". Mazdaznan doctrine unequivocally rejected the notion that only men could reach enlightenment and fostered the notion that humans formed part of the cosmos and could connect with all forms of being on a spiritual level. Through communion with "Nature" and the cosmos Molteno now worshipped a female goddess. Mazdaznan goddess Ainyahita (referred to as Anahita in Zoroastrianism) was the patron goddess of women, the goddess of fertility, water

and the giver of fluids such as milk and semen. I suggest further on that Molteno's choice to convert was a conscious disavowal of the restriction imposed on women's biological sex and rejection of the notion of female subjectivity as only embodied, that only men could reach enlightenment. Though, as seen above, earlier convictions persisted in her understanding of her body and although she later thought the body had "wonderful powers", she remained ambivalent to her own.

The question thus becomes, in light of the previous paragraphs, how does Molteno's relationship to her body change over time and how does it influence her subjectivity? I return to these questions in time but first discuss Molteno's relational subjectivity and how Mazdaznan teachings significantly influenced her perception of others and the relationships between humans and *objects*. Subjects can only comprehend themselves and experience a sense of wholeness and belonging in the presence of and through communion with others. Hélène Cixous, for example, suggests that subjectivity is *what* humans have in common and that it is thus a "non-closed mix of self/s and others" (xvii). As indicated in Chapter One, I regard subjectivity as relational and, to echo Butler, regard the "I" as filtered through and by a "you" or "others" (*Giving* 2-40). In the final year of her life Molteno wrote about the apparent "Oneness of Humanity", which resonates with the above notions of relational subjectivity.

Molteno wrote the following entry in her journal on 3 November 1926:

> Balance is indeed needed between the Past and the Present. The ever-moving stream of life never ceases its flowing, and the spirit of the times in which we live must also find its own special expression. Yet eternal, fundamental Truths can never change. They lie at the foundations of humanity. And so yesterday was a day that moved me much. It is the all-comprehensiveness of All Souls' Day that appeals to me. It is a poetic and beautiful way of stating the Oneness of Humanity. In this conscious brain of ours we are not able to realise all the individual unites [*sic*] that compose our Humanity – but intellectually and intuitionally we can in a measure grasp the idea.[75]

All Souls Day is a religious festival celebrated by, most notably, the Catholic Church, but is also practised by other Christian denominations. Molteno grew up attending an Anglican church with Anglo-Catholic teachings and apparently still attended church after her conversion to Mazdaznanism. All Souls Day is a holy day set apart to remember the dead and particularly

[75] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 3 November 1926. p. 1.

departed relatives. Rituals associated with the day comprise praying for the souls of the departed, visiting the graves of the dead and remembering loved ones who no longer dwell amongst the living. In this extract Molteno's notion of the "Oneness of Humanity" comes to the fore. She clearly enunciated her belief that the brain was not able to comprehend that "all the individual unites [*sic*] that compose our Humanity – but intellectually and intuitionally [one] can in a measure grasp the idea", meaning that she instinctively felt humans were 'one', that subjectivity was established by others. Mystic and spiritualist influences are also comfortably at work in her thoughts and writing here and blended without much trouble with Christian doctrines and religious practices. Molteno, in this extract, expressed an understanding of her subjectivity as composed by, mediated through and configured in response to others. Nevertheless, she distinguished between intuition and the conscious brain. Intuition, located more in the natural or the body, is thus the key to her understanding of the "ever-moving stream of life" that connects everything in the cosmos. The "conscious brain", according to Molteno, cannot logically understand that 'we' are "compose[d]" by other "unite[d] individuals". One could argue here that she started to internalise Mazdaznan teachings that centred the body as centripetal and centrifugal to the "Oneness of Humanity" and spiritual enlightenment. Moreover, one should note that the above extract was penned three years after the letter to her brother Charlie, quoted above, in which she still distinguished between body and soul. In this particular extract it appears that Molteno felt that her subjectivity was embodied (by relying on Nature and intuition), was relational. She explicitly stated that she was "compose[d]" by other individuals. Body and soul were thus regarded in this extract as connected, as one, not separate. The body was hence no longer regarded as an impediment, or as a tool, but as integral to self and "I" (and even others).

As mentioned before, Molteno's enters into a relational and intimate conversation with God in her prayer journals. The relational negotiation and *bildung* of her "I" through conversation with God was a practice she continued throughout her life in her life writing. This indicates that religion was always central to Molteno's subjectivity and her experience of her body. When younger, it appears from her writing that she experienced the body as a cage: she fell ill, her body manifested her mental strain, and it appears that she felt that she could not do what she desired because society placed restrictions on the female body. Her prayer journals constantly reflected that her body reacted to mental strain, as evidenced by her entries concerning Sarah Hall (in the previous

section). However, after she converted to Mazdaznanism she appears to have accepted the body and started to focus on its well-being (at least, the extract above conveys that impression).

The following extract exemplifies Molteno's changing attitude towards the body, the body's purpose, and her relationship to it; yet again highlighting the significance of religion to Molteno's subjectivity. However, it also, yet again, reveals Molteno's ambiguous attitude towards the body in the conflating and conflicting expressions she made in her journals. Molteno journalled the following on 4 October 1926:

> The Mazdaznan do not accentuate or pay much attention to Spiritualism. Their predominantly powerful keynote is – This body of ours is the temple of the living God – but that living God too often cannot make use of it because of our non-understanding and misuse of the marvellous mechanisms of which it is composed. That vast and infinitely varied orchestra of ours is in the condition of an untuned and never properly used musical instrument. And so we carry it about as a heavy clog and fetter that prevents our soul and spirit expressing through it. We are just tied down in this shifting panorama of things that is fleeting by like the scenes in a cinema – while we have lost all practical, purposeful contact with the higher and subtler realms of being. And therefore we believe in death, and sickness and disease is rampant [*sic*] – and perhaps more so in the white race than in any of the other races. The ancient religions taught a certain care of the body, and made their rules and regulations obligatory. Freedom in all directions is the keynote of the white race. Freedom to hang itself, and to destroy itself as quickly as possible by continuing to walk blindfold[ed] while making use of the vast incalculable powers of Nature for [an] end that they not themselves understand.[76]

Untangling the mass of conflicting statements in the above extract is challenging. Firstly, claiming that a mystic religion such as Mazdaznan does not pay "attention to Spiritualism" is absurd. Secondly, it appears that Molteno was making an argument in this extract that the body, in her then current understanding, was *the* most important factor in communion with God and, if the body was then not properly cared for (apart from it apparently becoming disease-ridden and dying), it prohibited the "soul and spirit expressing through it". In the above extract, the body is almost poetically likened to an untuned musical instrument and an "infinitely varied orchestra" because humans have "lost all practical, purposeful contact with higher and subtler realms of being". It seems that Molteno was under the impression that *through* the body humans experienced God and

[76] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 4 November 1926. p. 2.

the cosmos and so could reach enlightenment. She further stated that the "non-understanding and misuse of the marvellous mechanisms […] clog and fetter" spiritual access and apparently caused the "white race" to "believe in death, and sickness and disease". Thus, from what I am able to understand, Molteno tried to explain here that if humans were in tune with their bodies and God/Nature/Cosmos (not sure because she does not always distinguish between these concepts), their bodies would not become ill and they could become a clean conduit for the spirit to work through, the soul could easily access God. Irrespective of Molteno's intentions, in text her understanding of the body and its purpose is ambiguous. But what the above extract does manage to indicate is the complexity of subjectivity as it is always in flux, or to use Molteno's words, it is "ever-changing". As was seen, Molteno's body and her responses to it were integral to the formation of her subjectivity. At first, her body became ill, possibly because of the mental stress in her youth; later, the body was an "impediment" to Molteno's work and public activities and she did not "care" for it; then, the body became a tool to try and access spirituality. After joining the Mazdaznans, Molteno at first described the body as no more than a mere "garment" and explained that it could be considered as a "heavy clog" that could be used as a tool. But finally, the body, according to Molteno, was incalculably powerful and "marvellous" and the most important part of her religious life because she could seemingly reach enlightenment through the body. Thus, at the end of her life she developed a more holistic understanding of the association between body and soul and the connection between the physical and non-physical aspects of humanity.

Lastly, Molteno's focus on the "white race" in the above extract indicates the impact Mazdaznan teachings had on the non-racial convictions she expressed in her earlier writing. Yet, it appears (sadly) that she eventually internalised Mazdaznan teachings, which emphasised that the potential of the white race was much higher than that of other races. However, without much textual evidence I am cautious to extrapolate on this point any further, but I do elaborate somewhat in the following section. In the above extract, Molteno's use of "we" and "ours", collective nouns encompassing humankind (or maybe only whites), is significant; suggesting that her understanding of herself also became more relational towards the end of her life.

Molteno's subjectivity, as could be expected, fluctuated in response to its environment and experiences. Thus far I have examined sexuality, the body (and other bodies or people) and religion in relation to her subjectivity. I have also indicated how Molteno's religious conversion had a

significant impact on her subjectivity because her perception of herself, her body and her relationship to other people changed in response to her conversion. And yet, in my discussion of the above aspects of her life writing I have refrained from addressing her political opinions and the impact politics had on the formation of her subjectivity. My focus now turns to Molteno's creative writing and her political opinions concerning race and women's issues. I also consider the impact of prevalent gender and racial disparities in the society where Molteno lived and worked had on her own life, since a subject's lifeworld largely determines the subject.

Gender and Race in Betty Molteno's Autobiographical Poetry

Molteno started writing poetry at a very young age. Her first poems appear in her "Prayer Journals". As mentioned earlier, she also wrote protest poetry during the Anglo-Boer War, but these poems were published anonymously to protect the authors from persecution. However, in the last decade of Molteno's life, she wrote a large number of poems and also had many of her earlier poems typed by Miss O'D. Many of the boxes containing Molteno's archive in the Special Collections of the Jagger Library exclusively contain her poetry (see figure 6). Corder labelled her poetry typed in the 1920s as: "Betty's poems. Some almost a diary". Molteno's poetry can indeed be classified as autobiographical poetry (or as a kind of diary or simply as poetry). Much of her written poetry would be incomprehensible, even if examined by adept literary scholars, without knowledge of her life. Yet, one must also keep in mind that "poetry can be about autobiography, about the problems of memory, about textuality, subjectivity and representation without necessarily being autobiographical" (Gill and Waters 5). Nonetheless, in this thesis I do regard Molteno's poetry as autobiographical and utilise tools of life writing analysis to read it. I do not think that reading a poem as autobiographical erases its complexity or lyrical voice since I agree with Gill and Waters that "to claim a poem as 'autobiographical' is to recognise its status as a writerly piece of work, rather than to dismiss it as derivative or limited" (3). Louise Viljoen too, with reference to Celeste Schenk's work, "points out that it is not uncommon for womens' poetry to be read as autobiography, whether approvingly by feminist critics who see it as a site for female subject formation or disparagingly by male critics who see it as an indulgence in the personal and trivial" ("Mother as pre-text" 188). The genres of autobiography and poetry have historically (and contemporarily) been an "important mode of self-expression" (Viljoen 188) for women in patriarchal societies.

Even though I do not consider Molteno's poetry as "derivative or limited" (Gill and Waters 3), it is not what would be considered as 'literary' or 'high literature' and would probably never be canonised as 'high art' (as a cursory reading of any of her poems would illustrate). Her poetry has more in common with modernist stream of consciousness writing than traditional poetry. Molteno often started to write about one thing, person, event or memory and then continued to discuss many other seemingly unrelated themes or personages. Rarely does the end of a poem link back to the title or to the theme, event, idea or person introduced in the first few stanzas. In my opinion, it appears Molteno used her poetry as a textual conduit to clarify some of her ideas and clarify issues as she wrote about them. Molteno found inspiration for her creative writing in every part of her life and wrote about her memories, opinions and experiences in her poetry. On numerous occasions it does indeed read more like a diary entry – written in poetic form and with stanzas – than a poem. However, as Marisa Botha warns, where autobiographical facts and poetic form conflate and where genres overlap, a reader can interpret these configurations and spaces of the autobiographical and poetical within the parameters of both or either genre (2-3). Irrespective of my sensitivity to the poet's voice and identity, it is difficult to distinguish between the two theoretically. Thus, I read these poems as a form of life writing but acknowledge that they can be read as poetry. My aim in this section is to further elucidate Molteno's politics. Her politics clearly influenced the formation of her subjectivity; hence, in this section I examine the deployment of her subjectivity in her writing through the use of her creative and lyrical poetic voice. I do not refer to her subjectivity throughout, but my analysis illustrates how politics influenced Molteno's subjectivity, how she subsequently penned these expressions in her autobiographical poetry, drawing on the subjective to creatively express her thoughts.

After carefully reading her oeuvre, I decided to analyse three poems that are related but focus on varying aspects of her life to illuminate some political concerns expressed in her life writing. The three poems selected are "Baptism by Water", "Union of South Africa" and "The Divine Mother". My scrutiny reflects on her political and personal opinions, primarily regarding women and race. However, my analyses also include a discussion of her opinions pertaining to South Africa as a country and lastly some of her thoughts on religion. Full transcripts of these poems can be read in Appendix A (the poems are too long to include in full in this thesis). I do not use the conventional tools of poetry analysis such as citing line and stanza numbers as my focus is more on the autobiographical elements that convey Molteno's convictions and opinions, as expressed in the

lyrical language of poetry. My method in this section is to use her autobiographical poetry as tool to further explore and extrapolate on Molteno's political concerns. Politics was central to Molteno's subjectivity and from her autobiographical poetry, thus her creative writing, readers can clearly glimpse the impact of politics in her life, the formation of her subjectivity, and its ensuing manifestation in her life writing.

"Baptism by Water" invokes the image of the Mother Mary, or the "Divine in woman", and states that womanhood has become "forlorn" but through Mary "woman's soul is being reborn". The poem refers to some harrowing circumstances in which women found themselves in the nineteenth century, such as child prostitution and their circumstances in the slums where "God's precious human flowers [women] / Smirched were they in their early hours. / Men devoured by the demon of sensuality". One stanza reads: "O fateful, nineteenth century, / Your were preparing for the entry / Of Womanhood upon the world stage, / She on it must write a new page". The speaker in the poem hails William Stead[77] and Josephine Butler[78] as "Saviours" of womanhood who were courageous in their lives and deeds. The poem's last few stanzas conclude with a message to "humanity" to reinterpret its "creeds" to fit "humanity's desperate needs", to learn "anew" what "Baptism by Water" means. The speaker indicates that "Men and women must learn to stand together, / Hand in hand as sister and brother" to save humanity.

Much of the content of the poem reflected on events pertinent to the lives of Stead and Butler (see footnotes 71 and 72). Both advocated against child prostitution and because of their efforts the age

[77] Stead was the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, hailed as the founding father of popular journalism. He invented the interview and is known for his investigative journalism, of which the "Maiden's Tribute", reflected on by the speaker in the poem, was one of his most famous cases (Mooney 2012). He proved that the prostitution of young girls was happening by buying a young girl, Eliza Armstrong, from her drunk mother, having her drugged, smuggling her to a brothel and then proceeding to buy her for the night from the brothel. He then subjected her to medical tests to confirm that her virginity was intact (Mooney 2012). Consequently, Stead sent her to France to work as a laundress to save her from her 'fate' if she remained in the slums. Stead was widely criticised for terrifying the girl to prove his point.

[78] Josephine Butler was a social reformer in England during the nineteenth century. She particularly campaigned against child prostitution (supporting Stead), was central to the campaign that managed to raise the age of consent (regarding sex) for girls from 13 to 16 (BBC 2014). She also campaigned against the Contagious Diseases Acts (1869) under which government officials had women in ports and other presumed suspicious settings tested for venereal diseases. She furthermore advocated for women's rights, especially with regard to education, and because of her efforts, Cambridge erected Newnham College (where Betty studied) so that women could receive tertiary education from a University (BBC 2014). The poem also refers to the death of Butler's daughter, an event which was the catalyst for much of her political campaigning regarding social reform.

of consent for girls was raised to 16 instead of 13. The speaker in the poem explained that these "Saviours", men and women like Stead and Butler, "wrestled with the devil". Molteno wrote: "Youth and maiden alike were flung / Into the witches' cauldron. / In vain for them shone the glorious sun. / The devil's bell for them had rung". What emerges from this poem are some of the opinions Molteno had regarding women, women's rights and the degradation suffered by people living in poverty. I include an extract from her journal kept in 1926 to further reflect on the autobiographical elements and opinions expressed in "Baptism by Water":

> The days of the slavey [*sic*] in the dark, dreary lighted kitchen are gone we trust into the realms of never to return. And the old conceptions of marriage are altering too, as the men begin to see that unless they better paid their wives have to be not friends, comrades, companions, but slaves of a home that can never be bright, cheerful, and happy. For many long years past I have done a good many of my own chores. Certainly not to my full satisfaction, but at the same time no slavery has had to do them for me. I began this sort of thing during the Boer War, when I knew what the women in the Concentration Camps were going through. Some of my money went to help them to get some little comforts to ease their hardships, and one can't give away money unless one makes some sort of sacrifice oneself. I don't say I have not often done this sort of thing very stupidly. Still one must make a beginning of some sort or another, or one will never do anything in the way of saving a little to help other people. One must not do it by depriving oneself of absolute necessaries – that I have at last discovered. In all these matters common sense must come in. Your own body must [b]e attended or it will pay you out in very unpleasant and inconvenient ways. Anyone who is so eager to learn as I have always been is in danger of starving the body in order to feed the soul and spirit. Still it is better to do that than only to pamper the body, and keep it as the only thing that has to be considered.[79]

Molteno thought that women, or rather many wives, were treated as kitchen martyrs or "slaves". The analogy of woman's position in marriage and society as slaves was used during the nineteenth century by first-wave feminists (most inspired by the writing of Mary Wollstonecraft) and New Women towards the end of the century. Molteno considered traditional women's work, or any person paid to do housework labour, as paid or unpaid slavery. It is worth mentioning that Molteno did not advocate for women's rights when she was younger and even disagreed with the Suffrage movement. It was only later in the twentieth century she became vocal and passionate about the women's question. According to *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online* (2016), Molteno's preoccupation with the 'Native Question' was more important to her when she was middle-aged,

[79] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 10 December 1926. p. 1.

and she only later realised the extent of women's oppression and became involved. *The Olive Schreiner Letters Online* speculate that "from later letters it appears that Molteno was eventually won over to the suffrage movement after attending various lectures and speeches in London" (2018). Having Schreiner as her closest friend must surely have influenced her thoughts on gender relations and women's suffrage.[80]

Molteno's father, J.C. Molteno, was an advocate of non-racialism and ensured that Coloured people could vote in the Cape Colony. J.C. Molteno always invited political figures to his house at Claremont and discussed politics with his children (his daughters included). It is possible that J.C.'s non-racial politics influenced Molteno's politics and was the reason she thought the Native question was more important than women's liberation, a point I return to in following paragraphs. The date of this publication, 1926, should be considered. The above journal entry written later in life reflected on her experiences during the Anglo-Boer War a quarter of a century earlier. She discussed in the journal entry that her change of heart regarding woman's rights was partly due to the horrific conditions Boer women were plunged into while imprisoned in the concentration camps during the War.[81] She also attributed her concern with women's rights to her conversion to Mazdaznan.[82] As mentioned earlier, in 1900 Molteno and Alice were forced to resign as principal and vice-principal because they supported the Boers during the War. The couple then moved to Cape Town to assist with the efforts to relieve the suffering of Boer women and children by working for the Conciliation Committee.

The above extract shows that after the war Molteno continued to do her own chores and housework to personally protest the "slavery" of 'women's' labour, as she considered "chores". Busying herself domestically (especially since she possessed the funds to pay another to do these tasks) was

[80] The sheer volume of the Betty Molteno archive (which I could not read in its entirety) and the lacuna of research available on her life and life writing unfortunately accounts for the limited information I can provide on her activism for women's issues. All I can say with certainty is that she was involved with activist groups advocating for women's rights and that she regularly wrote on women's position and gender relationships towards the end of her life (as my chapter has already shown). I am investigating *some* of Betty's life *writing* and *not* compiling her biography in this chapter and am confident that Catherine Corder's upcoming biography will shed some much-needed light on this interesting South African woman.
[81] The atrocities of this war and the treatment of women and children are well documented, I therefore do not elaborate any further on this historical event.
[82] Molteno explicitly states in one of her journals: "It is the Mazdaznan people that have succeeded in making me realise that I must make a study of the subject [of women's rights]". (E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 1 November 1926. p. 2.)

a political act on her part to protest both the gendered and class aspects of domestic labour. Some of these opinions might even have been influenced by her close friendship with Schreiner. In relation to "Baptism by Water", one could say that she considered the work of Stead and Butler in the nineteenth century as the groundwork for women's liberation, as she regarded it, in the twentieth century. Her later support of women's suffrage and concern with women's rights comes to the fore in this poem and reaches fruition with the statement that the only hope for humanity is the equality of the sexes. She stated, for example, "that old conceptions of marriage [were] altering" since men realised that forced gendered labour did not make a home and marriage "happy" and "cheerful". Yet, Molteno also believed that universal peace was only made possible through women's strength. In a speech delivered in Durban (1913) to the Indian community, she said: "It was the woman's part in Africa to unite race and race together by the gentle refinement of true love. Womanhood in Africa, crushed and depressed in the past, would now come forth from the fire of suffering pure and true as gold".[83] It is at this point that even more contradictions appear in Molteno's life writing: why should Womanhood have to suffer to unite races and why does she think that suffering is necessary to refine and purify women? To some extent, Molteno's conception of Womanhood, women and their place in society conforms to dominant gender discourses of the time. One needs to bear in mind that these two extracts were penned/spoken 13 years apart and that Molteno's political opinions changed throughout her life, and yet, even the above extract contains sections relating female suffering or "depriv[ation]". Not that it is not commendable that she suffered to care for other women, simply that she thought it necessary (almost required) to deprive herself to the point of "starv[ation]". Finally though, it seems that at the end of her life she no longer thought one had to "sacrifice oneself" or remain chronically hungry for the sake of others.

In the "Union of South Africa", Molteno pondered racial issues, racial purity, the possibility of a united South African nation, imperialism, and Cecil John Rhodes' passing.[84] The main theme of the poem is the consideration of whether the "strife" and "death and damnation" rampant in South

[83] Found in Betty's papers, a typed manuscript with heading 'Extracts from the Writings of "C.F. Andrews, re Indian Affairs in S.Africa"', volume xvi, p.274: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. p. 3.
[84] Cecil John Rhodes was the Prime Minister of that Cape Colony from July 1890 to January 1896 but was forced to resign after the failure of the Jameson Raid that he supported in 1895-1896 with the aim of overthrowing the Transvaal Republic governed by 'Boers'. He was also a founding member and chief of the board of the De Beers Consolidated Mines, a staunch supporter of British Imperialism, and a capitalist.

Africa and during the war would "give birth to a united nation?". From the contents of the poem it appears as though Molteno was against miscegenation, stating that "New elements into the white blood will pass / What these are, as yet we vainly ask?" and "The rash mingling of blood / Would breed mischief on Africa's sod"; yet, she seemingly simultaneously opposed racism. For example, in the poem she states: "They would learn to respect one another / Realising great gifts were in each, / They would one another much teach / And learn the deep meanings of sister and brother." It seems, from the quoted stanza, that the speaker of the poem desired unity and "respect" between the white and black races of South Africa as between "sister and brother". The stanza also related the speaker's belief that different races could "learn" from each other and possessed great "gifts". To Molteno, the above-mentioned contradictory beliefs probably did not seem oppositional. These opinions regarding the "rash mingling of blood" and racial purity might have been influenced by Mazdaznan teachings and would appear at odds with contemporary conceptions of a person opposed to racism. However, other statements made by Molteno in her journal and in letters to her family written in the same year as the poem portray Molteno as a person deeply invested in the betterment of the conditions of black South Africans, whose equality with whites she advocated. For example, she was happy to report in her journal, after a discussion concerning South Africa's race politics earlier that particular day with her black friend and South African author Sol Plaatje: "The barrier of colour though not absolutely broken down is evidently thinning considerably".[85] Also, she noted in a letter to her sister Caroline Murray concerning the Union of South Africa's racial policies: "As it deals with the native inhabitants of South Africa so will it ultimately be dealt with itself! It is weaving its own Future! It is filling the cup out of which it will have itself to drink!".[86] One cannot help but ponder the prophetic nature of Molteno's statement in this instance. Molteno further wrote to Caroline: "But there is the still deeper question of the essential justice to which the original inhabitants of the country are entitled. They cannot be treated as outcasts from our system of civilisation – and at the same time be deprived of all opportunity of developing a civilisation of their own".[87] Finally, Molteno declared in a letter to her niece Lil: "But I have ever loved the dear, dark-skinned peoples – and in heart, soul and spirit have brooded over them, calling down blessings of God upon them".[88] Taking all of the above into account, Molteno's concerns in

[85] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 16 July 1923. p. 2.
[86] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 17 May 1923. p. 2.
[87] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 17 May 1923. p. 1.
[88] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 17 May 1923. p. 1.

later life with racial purity seem very strange and out of place from a contemporary understanding of non-racialism. Current conceptions of morality cannot be used to assess Molteno's thoughts and opinions (nor is it my intention in this thesis to judge her morality); however, as flawed as readers might view Molteno when judged from the perspective of contemporary frameworks, it is still necessary to remember that she thought remarkably different from many of her contemporaries.

Despite the thoughts expressed by the speaker of the "Union of South Africa" concerning miscegenation, the poem still advocated for unity among the people of different races in the Union. The hope expressed in the poem was that "native and Boer" would become "sister and brother". She referred to Africa as "she", "other" and the "so-called dark continent" that would repel Europeans not strong enough to thrive on her soil. Molteno's lament in the poem is for the loss of life and the continued strife in South Africa. She relayed her fear that it would all be in vain, encapsulated by the following stanza: "Southern Africa they covered with blood so red. / How many human beings to death were bled, / Boer, British and native mingled their blood / Deeply stained was the South African sod". Molteno regularly expressed concern in her journals that the Boer's treatment of the "Native" after South Africa became a Union mimics the British treatment of the Boer during the Anglo-Boer War and to a noticeable degree this fear seemed to be playing out in the autobiographical poem. In my opinion this must have caused Molteno much consternation because she deeply cared for both the "Boers" and so-called "dark-skinned peoples" of South Africa and in this instance, textually, her anxiety pertaining to the troubles between the groups became visible.

The speaker in the poem expressed her concern that "money", or rather capitalism, would reign supreme in South Africa since "Money, [is] the god of our present civilisation". Her aversion towards capitalism was also expressed in the extract from her journal quoted above. In 1899, during the War, she wrote the following to her brother Percy: "I have always dreaded and despised money, because to me it seems to drown the human soul, and to blunt all its finer sensibilities and trully [*sic*] nobler aspirations, in the same way that blinding, degrading poverty also does".[89] Molteno's aversion to money related to a possible adverse effect it had on a "human soul", according to the letter written to her brother. However, in the "Union of South Africa" she

[89] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 24 July 1899. Copied and typed on 2 April 1925. p. 1.

mentioned the "mementoes" left by Rhodes (in his will presumably) and his generosity pertaining to the fortune he accumulated during his life commends him to Molteno, makes her ask if he now talked "[i]n wise and loving fashion" to the "weary human race" and if he kept for them a "place" on the land he left to the people. It appears that the will and testament of Rhodes, to a certain degree, made Molteno forgive Rhodes for his perceived sins. It should be noted here that Rhodes was a bitter rival of Schreiner and Molteno (though, to the best of my knowledge, not publicly like Schreiner) who also vociferously disagreed with his actions during the Jameson Raid. I reiterate my point in the previous section about Molteno's capacity for forgiveness. Lastly, Molteno's thoughts on womanhood and religion are considered as they are given in "The Divine Mother".

"The Divine Mother" is of interest because it touches on Molteno's religious convictions, discloses aspects of her embodied and relational subjectivity, and manifests her thoughts on gender. The poem has two speakers, Molteno and the divine mother. At times it is difficult to distinguish between the two speakers. According to Mazdaznan teachings everything in the universe is part of Nature, thus, the sun and moon are feminine or part of the divine mother (probably the goddess Ainyahita). The speaker, Molteno, hailed the "sun" and stated that it was "making me new eyes to see / Priceless gifts coming from the sun" and even called herself "a child of the sun". Contrary to most ancient mythologies where the sun is always masculine, Molteno here considered the divine mother as the sun and not the moon. The symbolic position of "child of the sun" indicated a form of empowerment, further aided by the statement that "the sun helped to make my body". The speaker stated: "The divine mother is taking me into her arms, / She is teaching me new, lovely charms, / She is pouring into my soul balms / With sun she me purifies and warms". From this stanza it is clearly conveyed that the sun is considered as part of the divine mother and that *she* made the speaker anew, and not God. From this poem and Molteno's other writings it seems she started to praise God through the divine mother, something akin to Catholicism's worship of the Mother Mary (as related in "Baptism by Water"), rather than God himself, who is assumed to be male. This is also reminiscent of Molteno's access to God through physical touch shared with Sarah Hall's and Alice Greene's expression of communion with God through Molteno. This shift of worship to a female figure is thus not at odds with other parts of Molteno's life and writing. It is rather intriguing, with reference to the previous sections, that Molteno chose to worship a "Mother" figure – one can thus say that her preoccupation with 'Mothers' and motherhood is

something that lasted throughout her life and later played a significant part in her religious convictions.

The speaker of the poem then became the divine mother herself who said: "I will make thee whiter than snow. / Sunshine is bleaching thee. / You my filigree work begin to see, / The sun is shooting arrows from a powerful bow" and in a later stanza "I will create you anew. / Wonders to you I will show, / Ere out of your flesh body you go / Only to your light be ever true". Molteno, shortly after this stanza ends, again became the speaker and reflected on the nature of "Man" and the manner in which he could allow himself to be made "anew" by the divine mother.

Molteno's worship of the divine mother to me suggests a 'feminist' agenda. She wrote the following in her 1926 journal:

> The great masses of the people are under the domination of Sex. For them it is an overwhelming force, which sweeps away all barriers. If the women have no understanding of this all-important matter, do they not become the slaves of Sex? And if they are enslaved, will not that enslave the man as well? There is no question as to the vital importance of some new teaching in this direction. In Eastern lands some regulations and rules have to be obeyed by the masses. But the White Ra[c]e claims that freedom of choice is the birthright [*sic*] of every individual. How then can the White Race permit itself to become the slave of Sex? That it has become the slave of Sex cannot be doubted by anyone who has deeply studied this leading problem of our day. Women have been taught that it is their duty to blindly give up their bodies for the use of their husbands. This is as far as I can understand it is the teaching of the great Roman Church.[90]

She then stated in her journal, after the section quoted above, that it was the aim of the Mazdaznan masters to make men and women aware of the "domination of Sex". I think, from the above extract, that Molteno was talking about "[s]ex" as both the act and as gender. I propose that Molteno's attraction to the Mazdaznan religion and the worship of the divine mother is directly linked with her disavowal of conventional gender roles and the oppression of women. Molteno, at the end of her life, asked: "And if [women] are enslaved, will not that enslave the man as well"? And yet, in "The Divine Mother", when Molteno refers to "Man" (meaning human in this instance), she unconsciously still used the masculine pronoun "he", illustrating, in a manner of speaking, how insidiously gendered early twentieth-century discourse was. Molteno was much more attuned to the subtleties of language and gender relations than most and still (understandably) slipped when

[90] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 1 November 1926. p. 2.

referencing “Man”. However, the above extract clearly shows that Molteno became invested in women’s issues in later life and that she detailed her thoughts on gender relations in her journals and autobiographical poetry.

Molteno’s subjectivity was clearly formed *in response to* her surroundings, other people, dominant discourses of her time, her sexuality and religious teachings. I have indicated that Molteno’s embodied subjectivity was relational, shaped by experiences and other people. What is interesting is that her archive consisting of her life writing spans almost her entire life and one is thus able to track the constant (re)formation or “compos[ition]” (to use her word) of her subjectivity. In this chapter I discussed Molteno’s difficulty as a young girl and woman to make sense of her sexuality in an environment where lesbianism was largely invisible and not often spoken. The solution then was to create her own discourse to account for her sexuality. Her body, as was illustrated through her journals, manifested her mental anxieties in the form of headaches and hysterical outbreaks. I further explored Molteno’s conversion to Mazdaznan and the influence of religion on her relationship with her body. Lastly, I examined her autobiographical poetry to illustrate how she creatively deployed her subjectivity and penned (among other things) her thoughts on gender and race. In the following chapter I discuss the letters and autobiographical fiction of Hettie Smit to illustrate the effects that the gendered nature of Afrikaner nationalism had on her subjectivity and its consequent manifestation in her writing.

Chapter Three

"'n [G]esplete wese" [A bifurcated being]:[91] Hettie Smit, Afrikaner Nationalism and Gender Politics

Figure 7 Photograph of Hettie Smit as older woman

In my previous chapter I discussed, in part, Betty Molteno's shifting perspectives/views on gender inequality in South African and Western societies, expressed in her journals, letters and autobiographical poetry. As I demonstrated, Molteno seemingly did not consider women's legal,

[91] H. Smit: Nasionale Afrikaanse Letterkundige Museum en Navorsingsentrum [National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre] (NALN), Hettie Smit versameling [Hettie Smit collection] (HS collection), Raad vir Geesteswetenskaplike Navorsing (RGN) versameling [collection] 091 SMI, dokument nommer [document number] (Dn.) 11/56. November 1933. p. 6.

economic and social inferiority a central political concern during her youth; however, debates about women's empowerment and the right to political representation significantly influenced the formation of her subjectivity in the last decade of her life. This chapter, in contrast, has a more pronounced focus on gender and politics. I discuss here the marked impact of gendered Afrikaner nationalism, notably of the first decades of the twentieth century, on the subjectivity formation of Afrikaans writer Hettie Smit (1908-1973). To this purpose, I explore the ways in which this gendered political ideology influenced Smit's sense of self, as evinced in her letters and autobiographical fiction. Smit's acclaimed 'novel' *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* [She appears with the Sickle Moon] (1937)[92] is widely regarded as an anomaly in South African literary history (Koch "Hettie Smit" 1-3). Not only was *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* (hereafter referred to as *Sekelmaan*) one of the first texts written by a woman to be canonised in the Afrikaans literary canon shortly after publication, but its form too was considered unconventional in Afrikaans literary practice of the time. *Sekelmaan* was the first 'novel' (I will explain my use of scare quotes shortly) to combine two life writing forms of storytelling in Afrikaans literature, namely the epistolary narrative and the diary tradition (Koch "Hettie Smit" 672-675). It is also noteworthy that *Sekelmaan* is the only text in long-form *prose* considered as part of the body of work produced by the group of canonical writers known as the *Dertigers* [1930s authors],[93] whose individual oeuvre consists of texts primarily written in the poetic form (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 7-9; De Wet 1-94). However, as I illustrate in this chapter, Smit's text is much more significant than previously

[92] Directly translated this title would read *She comes with the Sickle Moon*. Gerrit Olivier opted to translate this title as *She comes with the Crescent Moon* (314). All other translations of Afrikaans texts to English are my own unless otherwise indicated. The method of translation employed for this thesis is to provide both the original Afrikaans text and an English translation for readers unfamiliar with Afrikaans. I choose to include the original Afrikaans texts (letters and other archival sources) because most of the materials I analyse are unpublished. This technique would enable other Afrikaans literary scholars to utilise the material I make available in this thesis. I attempt a comprehensive translation, even though it is not always grammatically and aesthetically pleasing; I do not merely translate meaning but attempt to retain the archaic and idiosyncratic grammar and structure of the original sentences. Sometimes, for the sake of brevity, I paraphrase Afrikaans criticism in English without providing the original Afrikaans formulation.

[93] The *Dertigers* were a group of Afrikaans poets (W.E.G. Louw, N.P. van Wyk Louw, Elisabeth Eybers and Uys Krige), apart from Smit, who wrote prose. They rejected the poetry of their predecessors because they felt it was a "superannuated" and "inadequate" method of writing that no longer spoke to the ways in which they experienced the world (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 7). The *Dertigers'* poetry is I-centred, written in a confessional tone, reflective of individual experience. The style is usually associated with a kind of poetry that aimed at constructing verse that was 'beautiful', usually employing a grandiloquent turn of phrase (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 8). Their endeavour was to reflect on a universal global human condition that addressed everyone, and not merely to reflect on the local with a "limited colonial tradition" (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 8).

credited. I suggest that *Sekelmaan* is the first autobiographical fiction (masquerading as a novel) to be published in Afrikaans. Although I consider the text as crucial for my interpretation of Smit's life writing, and what it suggests about her subjectivity, my examination of her letters indicates that closer scrutiny of this archival material is central to broadening interpretations of *Sekelmaan*, given that it emerges that Smit wrote both as an "I" and an other "I" – as Hettie (primary "I") and Hessie (other "I"). Intriguingly, these two personas appear distinctly different yet share characteristics, a stylistic technique Smit also employed in *Sekelmaan.* I suggest that Smit's split subjectivity can be read as redolent of her "bifurcated being", as she described herself in a letter she wrote to her friend Kalie Heese. My primary texts for this chapter are letters written by Smit to friends during the 1930s and *Sekelmaan*. I utilise these archival materials, and refer to *Sekelmaan* to corroborate my reading, to illustrate the adverse effects the gendered ideology of Afrikaner nationalism had on Smit's subjectivity, the splitting of self into an "I" and other "I", and her ability to author and assert her "I".

A crucial question to ask in a project that examines written figurations of subjectivity formation is: who was the subject? So, I start this chapter by providing a short biography of Hettie Smit. Smit was born in the Venterstad district (in the Free State Province) on the farm Ezelshoek on 21 November 1908.[94] Her childhood was spent in Koffiefontein and she later attended school at Brandfort. According to biographical information provided by Smit's son, Schalk van Vuuren (26 April 2018), Smit's parents were Daniël Petrus Smit (1880-1937) and Susanna Lasea Smit, neé Kruger (1884-).

Smit was the oldest of three children, she had a sister named Romela (Romie) Unice (1912-) and a younger brother Hendrik Bernardus Smit (1921-). Smit studied education at the University of Cape Town (UCT). After completing her first degree, she simultaneously enrolled for a postgraduate diploma and a Masters Degree in Education. According to Smit the workload was overwhelming and she failed her diploma but passed her degree, but after careful consideration of the exemplary quality of her thesis, the University allowed her to redo two subjects for her

[94] This biography is compiled from various published and unpublished sources. I attempted to include information not available in other existing biographies of Smit's life. Some of the biographical information appeared in newspaper articles or in the correspondence between Smit and her friends. Some sources locate Venterstad in the Free State Province and others in what was the Cape Province; contemporarily, Venterstad is situated in the Eastern Cape.

diploma.[95] It was at UCT where Smit met W.E.G. Louw, the young Afrikaans poet with whom she fell in love; he became the male muse of her tale of heartbreak captured in *Sekelmaan* (1937). After graduating, she took various teaching posts in Wellington, Prince Albert, Bloemfontein[96] and at Diamantfields High School in Kimberley. On 6 July 1941 she married Sarel Johannes van Vuuren in Bloemfontein.[97] Hannes, as he was known, was a government employee at the Department of Agriculture.[98] Previously, he too taught at schools in Bloemfontein and Potchefstroom, and worked as a journalist for *The Friend* in Bloemfontein. The young couple relocated to Pretoria where Smit worked as a translator at the Central Translation Unit of the State.[99] She resigned when she expected their second son.[100] The first, Daniël Petrus, was born on 25 August 1941 and the second, Dawid Schalk, on 19 February 1947. Once the boys were older, Smit taught Afrikaans and German at Pretoria West High School.[101] Talented at music, and an avid admirer of Brahms, Bach and Beethoven (whom she collectively called the only three Bs that matter), she also taught music.[102] According to a journalist who interviewed her at her house three years prior to her death, Smit and Hannes collected vinyl records, consisting of approximately 600 albums.[103] Her interests in the arts expanded as she matured; later in her life she took up painting. In 1970 she playfully told a journalist that she had chosen her daughters-in-law (both named Linda) for her sons; the youngest of the two was her "spogleerling"[104] [best student]. Although Smit did not enjoy talking to

[95] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/27. 15 December 1932. pp. 1-3.; H. Smit: HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/36-7. 1933.
[96] H. Smit: NALN, Ernst van Heerden collection, Dn. MS 1100/96/2800. 26 April 1937. p. 1. This collection was donated to NALN by Stellenbosch University Library and Information Services Manuscripts Section. The biographies available on Hettie Smit do not include Eunice Girls High School as one of the institutions where Smit was a teacher. According to this letter by Smit, addressed to poet Ernst van Heerden, she taught at this school in Bloemfontein at the time.
[97] Author unknown: NALN, HS collection, Knipsels [Cuttings]. No further information available.
[98] NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, Hettie Smit biography compiled by NALN. No further information available.
[99] J. Smuts: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Die sekel kom met die volmaan. ′n Huldeblyk aan Hettie Smit deur J. Smuts", *Die Huisgenoot*. 26 October 1973. p. 66.
[100] J. Smuts: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Die sekel kom met die volmaan. ′n Huldeblyk aan Hettie Smit deur J. Smuts", *Die Huisgenoot*. 26 October 1973. p. 66.
[101] Author unknown: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Skryfster van beroemde roman word skilderes.", Dn. 19.6.54. No further information available.
[102] Author unknown: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Skryfster van beroemde roman word skilderes.", Dn. 19.6.54. No further information available.
[103] Author unknown: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Skryfster Hettie Smit – oud en getroud", *Transvaler*. 12 June 1970.
[104] Author unknown: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Skryfster Hettie Smit – oud en getroud", *Transvaler*. 12 June 1970.

journalists and actively tried to avoid them, those who managed to interview her[105] all remarked on her beautiful paintings.

Figures 8, 9, 10 and 11 below are examples of her paintings which I include here with permission of her son and the National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre (NALN). According to Smit, she took many photo slides and used these as templates for her paintings.[106] Painting and music remained crucial hobbies until Smit's death on 12 September 1973. Clearly, she was a creative person with a lifelong passion for the arts.

Figure 8 Nog 'n mapogger skildery

[105] J. Moody: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Hettie (Sy Kom Met Die Sekelmaan) Smit Breek Haar Stilswye.", *Dagbreek en Sondagnuus*. 7 June 1964.
[106] Author unknown: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Skryfster Hettie Smit – oud en getroud", *Transvaler*. 12 June 1970. According to her son, while on family road trips Smit would frequently ask her husband to stop at the side of the road so that she could photograph something she thought beautiful and wished to paint later.

Figure 9 DP Smit, Hettie Smit skilder haar pa

Figure 10 Portretstudie van Mikro

Figure 11 Vuurpyle

To contextualise my reading of her letters, a short plot summary of *Sekelmaan* is required, as well as some comments about the style and form of this book, which I frequently refer to in my analysis. At the age of 29, Smit's much-acclaimed 'novel' *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* was published. The narrative consists of seven related but separate sections. Parts one, two and seven are written as diary entries and parts two to six follow the epistolary tradition. The letters are addressed to one person, Anna, who becomes Maria's confidante. The protagonist, Maria, meets a writer and intellectual, Johan, and falls in love with him but her romantic feelings are not reciprocated. In part one, after Johan neglects Maria and forms a new intellectual friendship with a man, a persona named Marié emerges. Marié gains prominence and becomes stronger towards the end of part one and onwards. The rest of the narrative concerns the struggle between what critics call the 'ego' (Maria) and 'alter ego' (Marié), or the intellectual, rational and cultured side of the writing subject's personality (Maria) and her emotional, natural, aesthetic and impulsive other half (Marié) (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 10-30; de Wet 9-20; Koch *Outsider* 133-134; Kannemeyer *Geskiedenis* 464). From part two onwards the diary entries and letters are narrated alternatively from the perspective of Maria or Marié, showing that each is aware of the existence of the other, cohabiting the same body. Technically and textually, Marié becomes an extension of Maria or the part of her she struggles to reconcile with her rational side. In Cartesian terms, Maria represents the elevated 'mind' driven ideals of the protagonist while Marié embodies the chained 'corporeal' side and its natural urges. Critics read the splitting of the Maria-Marié self into 'intellectual' and 'natural' as a writing technique that serves to alleviate boredom caused by the stylistic and sentimental confessions. However, I suggest in this chapter that such a reading is restrictive, especially when one considers that Smit wrote as two characters or subjects, Hettie and Hessie, in her letters addressed to Ulrich Gerryts, W.E.G. Louw, Kalie Heese and Andries Alberts. I explore this "bifurcated being" at length throughout the chapter. But to conclude my discussion of the book, it is necessary to mention that not much happens in the way of a plot: the book is and was successful because it narrates, in arresting yet sentimental prose, the emotional turmoil and despair of Maria and Marié after Johan's rejection of her/them. The key to the success of the book therefore has less to do with plot and more with form and narration; thus, the confessional style in which it was written.

It was later revealed that *Sekelmaan* was selected in 1939 by the Literary Commission of the South African Academy for Science and Art for one of the most distinguished Afrikaans literary awards,

namely the Hertzog Prize. F.I.J. van Rensburg mentions three reasons the said Academy decided against the Literary Commission's recommendation of the book for the award: it was a debut novel; the form was experimental and foreign to the existing tradition of Afrikaans literature; and its emphasis on "die estetiese vertroeteling van persoonlike gevoelens"[107] [the aesthetic overindulgence of personal feelings] was too sentimental to be considered acceptable for such a distinguished award. That a female author was even considered for this distinguished prize at this time in South African literary history (and by rights should have received the award because the Literary Commission had selected the novel) is remarkable. I return to this incident later in the chapter. Significantly, the book was reprinted fifteen times (by 1990)[108] and is still periodically prescribed by Afrikaans departments of higher education institutions in South Africa. The book was also a set work at some high schools. *Sekelmaan* continues to inspire Afrikaans authors. The most recent example of an author drawing on *Sekelmaan* for inspiration is Marlize Hobbs' *As sy weer kom* [*When she comes again*] (2018), in which she uses Smit's pioneering technique of employing two personas. In 2016, Valda Jansen's *Hy kom met die Skoenlappers* [*He comes with the Butterflies*] (2016) was published, an obvious homage to its literary predecessor. Preceding Jansen's publication, acclaimed poet, feminist and literary scholar Joan Hambidge published a parody of *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* and other Afrikaans narratives under the title *Swart Koring* [*Black Wheat*] (1996).

Archival materials on Smit are limited. Although the National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre (NALN) holds a substantial archive on Smit (i.e. a comprehensive collection of newspaper cuttings, reviews, portraits painted by Smit, some books owned by the author herself, interviews conducted with the author, hard copies of academic articles published in peer reviewed journals, and Smit's private letters), the letters in this archive only roughly span the period 1930-1942. Therefore, it seems there is no material, for example, that covers the years of her marriage and motherhood. The Stellenbosch University Library and Information Services Manuscripts Section (SULISMS) collection pertaining to Smit also contains no letters, journals or other life writing materials of the years after *Sekelmaan*'s publication or of Smit's married, personal life.

[107] F.I.J. van Rensburg: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Miskende boek wat hom nie laat misken nie", *Die Volksblad*, 17 June 1996. p. 4.
[108] F.I.J. van Rensburg: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Miskende boek wat hom nie laat misken nie", *Die Volksblad*. 17 June 1996. p. 4.

Considering the lack of available life writing materials in public archives regarding the post-*Sekelmaan* period and the chapter's focus on Smit's life *writing*, my research might seem restricted, plighted even, in its narrow focus on Smit's life and writing as a *young* woman. My analysis of her letters in this chapter indicates, for example, her fear of claiming authorship and asserting herself. Consequently, she is mostly, but not exclusively, portrayed as insecure. From additional sources I gathered, such as published interviews conducted by journalists with Smit during the post-*Sekelmaan* period, my personal correspondence with her son Schalk van Vuuren, and correspondence between Amanda Botha and actress Katinka Heyns after a visit to Smit in 1972,[109] she is portrayed as a strong, rather feisty, confident, intelligent, artistic, outspoken, self-assured, multifaceted, complicated and intriguing woman when she was *older*. It is therefore lamentable that my examination of her available letters offers only a limited and partly one-dimensional portrayal of Smit as mostly insecure because I had no access to her life writing as an older woman.

Although Smit published writing in other forms, *Sekelmaan* is her only work in long prose.[110] Despite its success, it appears she did not wish to write or publish another book, although some sources indicate that she toyed with the idea. In a letter to poet Ernst van Heerden thanking him for sending her poems to read that later appeared in his first collection of poetry, *Weerlose Uur* [Defenceless Hour] (1942), she wrote: "Jy moet meer skryf – en nie net binne-in soos ek nie"[111] [You should write more – and not just inside like me]. What one can surmise from the interviews conducted with Smit in later years, she no longer felt any desire to write (not even on the 'inside', as she described it to Van Heerden). Presumably, she preferred to pursue her other creative interests such as music and painting. She even went so far as to describe "haar romanskrywery as ′n glips"[112] [novel writing as an accident]. What I have garnered from my research is that Smit

[109] These letters are part of the Amanda Botha collection (Ms 318) kept at the Stellenbosch University Library and Information Services Manuscripts Section (SULISMS).
[110] Kannemeyer includes a complete list of Smit's other publications in a cursory examination of her life and work. Other publications by Smit besides *Sekelmaan* include: a few submissions to *Huisgenoot*, some reviews, two articles about the nature of writing and her own writing, two short stories titled "Oom Gawie" and "Oorle Breggie skryf vir Jan", and an article about Mikro's work (Kannemeyer *Geskiedenis* 463). Worth mentioning too is the adaptation of *Sekelmaan* in 1972 into a one-woman show for the stage (although not by Smit). Katinka Heyns portrayed the role of Maria/Marié.
[111] H. Smit: NALN, Ernst van Heerden (MS) collection, Dn. MS 1100/96/4022, 11 November 1942. p. 1.
[112] Author unknown: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Skryfster van beroemde roman word skilderes.", Dn. 19.6.54. No further information available.

funelled her creative energies into other artistic forms probably because of blistering criticism of *Sekelmaan.* The traumatic experience (as I show further on) made for a paltry appetite for further writing and publishing. However, she mentioned to journalist John Moody that she might consider writing again if she ever reached a stage of "oorrypheid"[113] [overmaturity].

Years ago, I was told by an acquaintance who lent me her copy of *Sekelmaan* that it was a 'true story', so my initial interest in Smit's writing was kindled by the alleged autobiographical features of the narrative. I wanted to explore the rumoured truth value and this interest, in turn, led me to the blurred boundaries between the autobiographical and fictional qualities of the text. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, one the texts I studied for my master's project was Melina Rorke's *Melina Rorke: Her Amazing Experiences in the Stormy Nineties of South Africa's Story, Told by Herself* (1938 and 1939). I suggested that Rorke's narrative could be regarded as the first example of South African autobiographical fiction in English written by a woman. Rorke's autobiographical fiction was published the year following *Sekelmaan*'s publication. So, *Sekelmaan*'s rumoured status as 'based on a true story' aligns with my interest in women's autobiographical fiction in South African literary history. However, as I will show in this chapter, I did not and could not anticipate what Smit's letters would reveal about the narrative aesthetics of *Sekelmaan.* I discovered that the text's publication history and genre classification were more intriguing, complex even, than I had originally imagined.

My scrutiny of Smit's correspondence with the renowned psychologist Kalie Heese (housed at NALN) revealed that some of the letters Smit wrote to Heese are almost exact replicas of the letters featured in *Sekelmaan*, represented there as written by Maria or Marié to their friend Anna. In the first part of this chapter, I explain why I find it regrettable that scholars have mostly neglected to consult the archival material of the NALN and Stellenbosch University Library. In my view, this material offers hitherto unknown insights concerning the text's history and, as I will show, opens new avenues for interpreting *Sekelmaan,* informed by Smit's personal writing. I further conduct a gender analysis of Smit's conscious decision to change the gender of her confidante (male Kalie to female Anna) in the published version of the letters to argue that her choice was anchored in her anxieties about female authorship in a phallocentric Afrikaner society. Her choice of re-gendering

[113] J. Moody: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Hettie (Sy Kom Met Die Sekelmaan) Smit Breek Haar Stilswye", *Dagbreek en Sondagnuus*. 7 June 1964.

Heese to Anna in the published, therefore public, versions of the letters, I suggest, is rooted in Smit's internalisation of patriarchy. It is therefore important to investigate her letters and other life writings to understand the arguably gendered insecurities evident in Smit's writing about her position as an author. This knowledge is imperative for an understanding of the adaptations Smit made to her private life writing included in the public printed version of *Sekelmaan*. Furthermore, I use extracts from her letters in this section to argue that *Sekelmaan* could be regarded as autobiographical fiction, not fiction, and I reflect on the implications of this recategorization for reading the text, and its positioning in Afrikaans literary studies.

The most intriguing insight that came to light through my study of the archival material is the presence of two separate identities (Hettie and Hessie) used in Smit's letters. As I have clarified in the short summary of *Sekelmaan*, two separate identities, Maria and Marié, similarly feature in *Sekelmaan*. This unearthing of two "I"s in Smit's private correspondence, remarkably similar to Maria and Marié in *Sekelmaan*, advances my argument that Smit wrote, and thought of, herself as a split subject. Certain observations in Smit's correspondence seem to confirm this reading. In a letter to Heese, Smit describes herself as a "gesplete wese" [a bifurcated being], the comment which inspired the title of this chapter. In the second part of this chapter, I therefore expand my analysis of her "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar 45) to suggest that her split subjectivity, manifested in writing either Hettie or Hessie, relates to Smit's relational negotiations between broader Afrikaner society and her right to authorship. My investigation of Smit's position as a woman writer of the 1930s, and the apprehensions she experienced as female author living in a mostly conservative and restrictive patriarchal society, adds to debates about women's struggles and their attempts to enter more traditionally masculine territories such as literary writing. Ultimately, this chapter sheds light on one woman's battle for entitlement to author texts within patriarchal social frameworks that excluded women from perceived masculine activities. This section also serves as further evidence for my argument for the possible reclassification of *Sekelmaan* as autobiographical fiction.

My theoretical framework is underpinned by research conducted by feminist historiographers writing about Afrikaner women and gendered Afrikaner society, in particular the work of Louise Vincent, Marijke du Toit, Ingrid Glorie, Hermann Giliomee and Charl Blignaut. Furthermore, I draw on the ideas of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman*

Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (1979) to suggest that Smit's unease as female author bears singular resemblance to the struggles of British women's writing in the nineteenth century. However, to guard against an ahistorical approach in my interpretation of a twentieth-century Afrikaans subject and her writing, I combine Gilbert and Gubar's theoretical extrapolations of nineteenth-century authors with the scholarly work of Afrikaans feminist historiographers. I pay close attention to her geo-historical space and context. The centrality of the body emerges as a topic of inquiry in my discussion. To this purpose, I rely on the theorisations of various feminists (Susan Bordo (90-110), Hélène Cixous (xv-xxi), Katie Conboy, Wadia Medina and Sarah Stanbury (1-14)) who debate biological essentialism and embodiment in women's writing. This focus relates to my arguments about Smit's splitting of her subjectivity into two "I"s in her writing.

As indicated in my opening paragraph, the primary life writing material analysed in this chapter are mostly letters. Initially, I intended to focus on *Sekelmaan* and how the narrative techniques Smit employed could be interpreted as a blending of two life writing genres, namely the epistolary tradition and the diary novel. However, after reading the letters, my interest shifted to foregrounding the letters as primary materials, and to cross-reference the novel as additional source. Therefore, I do not *analyse* the novel, but frequently refer to it to illustrate through my reading and analysis of the letters that the novel can be categorised as autobiographical fiction. My primary analysis of the letters necessarily contributes to future discussions of *Sekelmaan* and calls for a readjustment to how the novel *could* be categorised and interpreted. Investigating female subjectivity through the genre lens of letters is arguably appropriate since "[s]ubjektiwiteit is […] ′n kenmerk van ′n brief" [subjectivity is a mark of a letter] (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 4). The method of analysis in this chapter draws on various life writing interpretative approaches as suggested in especially Smith and Watson's *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2010); it particularly pays close attention to the nature of letter writing. As mentioned in Chapter One, letters are generally assumed to be a conversation between a writer and intended reader(s), as letters are written with a particular recipient in mind (an individual or a group). The veracity of autobiography as 'truth', for example, has been widely discussed by life writing theorists but has not necessarily been considered in letter writing, also a form of life writing. In Margaretta Jolly and Liz Stanley's published academic 'conversation' about letter writing in "Letters as / not a genre" (2005), Jolly states that the study of letters

> can open up a whole new archive for life writing enthusiasts and with that archive, the questions we now associate with the territory: representativity; the relation of individuals to social context; the assessment of individual agency; whether and how narrative is essential to identity; the relationship between individual and collective time and memory and, perhaps most prominently, the peculiar reflexivity and relativity of research in the field (92).

Jolly and Stanley continue with a discussion of the difficulties of analysing letters and their 'truth' value in relation to the self and wider society. Furthermore, they state that letters written by literary figures usually present a more pressing problem in that these texts are also in some way constructed and written for aesthetic and self-exploratory purposes that bring into question the reliability of information and reflections penned (92-93). This last point is important to my analysis of Smit's letters because, as I will illustrate, her letters are more aesthetic than factual and a kind of creative literary self-exploration. 'Conventional' letters between, say, family members and friends usually share general observations, tell witty anecdotes or discuss the weather. These kinds of letters are generally less adorned or aesthetic in style than some literary writers' letters.

Stanley further determines four key aspects of letter writing. First, letters involve "exchanges"; there is a writer and reader who interchange in the conversation (94). Second, letters have "purposeful intent" apart from being "relational"; there is a goal in mind when letters are exchanged (94). The third is the "referential aspect"; there is something in the 'real world' the letters reflect on, act upon or respond to; and fourth, letters are situated on the "boundaries of the personal and impersonal" (94). This last aspect explains the interest of scholars of many disciplines in letters. Readers not only catch glimpses of the writers' lives, experiences and reflections in this form, they also learn about the historical and social moment in which letters were penned. This interplay between the private and public forms one of the tenets of my analysis as I argue, in reference to the letters and *Sekelmaan*, that Smit's 'personal' experiences were shaped by her reaction to the 'impersonal' or, in other words, the larger (patriarchal) Afrikaner society. Her subjectivity emerged and evolved in response to external factors determined by her society, context and time.

My previous chapter focused, in part, on Molteno's responses to, and involvement with, racial politics. The next chapter discusses Joyce Waring's discriminatory and biased racial politics as expressed in her autobiographical texts. Thus, Chapter Four also foregrounds race as an important factor in women's life writing and its significance in shaping a person's subjectivity. This chapter,

however, does not include an overt discussion of race because any reference to or awareness of it in Smit's letters is negligible and almost non-existent. I found few instances in Smit's letters where she mentioned people of other races and no reference to her own race; I therefore do not shape the focus of this chapter pertinently around race. Nonetheless, a discussion of Afrikaner nationalism is in itself a discussion of racial politics; the patriarchal, sexist and racist nature of Afrikaner nationalism was formed partly in opposition to other races. Smit suffered the ill-effects of Afrikaner nationalism even though she formed part of the community because her subjectivity was significantly shaped by its gendered nature. It could be said that she was co-opted by the patriarchal nature of Afrikaner nationalism. So, even though I do not specifically refer to race throughout this chapter, my discussion centres on the detrimental effects of whiteness coalescing with nationalism. For the remainder of this introductory section, I provide a brief historical overview of Afrikaner women's position in society before and during the period in which Smit was raised, as well as the subsequent period in which she produced her important text and penned her letters. This outline provides the necessary backdrop for an understanding of my explanation of Smit's anxieties regarding her position as woman writer in a specific time and place. I suggest in this chapter that her gendered angst regarding authorship might have led to the employment of two "I"s in her writing and might have prompted her decision to swap the gender of her confidante in the public and published versions of her letters.

Afrikaner Women in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa

So, what are the conditions that shaped twentieth-century Afrikaner women's identities and subjectivities (women such as Smit)? Historian Hermann Giliomee argues in "'Allowed such a State of Freedom': Women and Gender Relations in the Afrikaner Community before Enfranchisement in 1930" (2010) that (white) Afrikaner women, before the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century, had a "legal position [that] was probably stronger than that of any women in Europe or the European colonies" (60). He traces legal, cultural and political aspects regarding women and society from the arrival of the Dutch settlers at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 to (white) enfranchisement in 1930. Under Roman Dutch law, the legal system used in the Cape, Natal and later the two Boer Republics, women could: own property, inherit under partible inheritance half of their husbands' estate; file for divorce under certain circumstances; and operate and own their own businesses (32-37). The British occupied the Cape first for a brief period

between 1795 and 1802, and then aggressively acquired the territory from the Dutch in 1806. By 1814, the British Cape Colony was firmly established with the Anglo-Dutch treaty. The farmers and settlers of mostly Dutch descent resented the British and many widows with their own wagons joined the Great Trek from 1835 onwards.[114] These women, of mainly Dutch descent, wielded considerable political and cultural power during the nineteenth century. In 1872, as mentioned in Chapter Two, the Cape Colony became self-governing and in 1874 changed the law on partible inheritance to the British primogeniture law of inheritance by which the eldest son inherited all property and most of the capital (54). After the two Boer Republics were consolidated in 1910 to form part of the Union of South Africa, Roman Dutch law was mostly replaced with British law and primogeniture inheritance was legislated. Consequently, Afrikaner women in the former Republics lost their right to inherit their deceased husbands' property. Daughters were similarly affected. Whereas they previously received the same portion of their fathers' property as their brothers, they now received nothing or very little. In effect, the law of primogeniture disempowered Afrikaner women from 1910 onwards. It follows that Afrikaner women's legal and to a certain degree cultural position in colonial and nineteenth century Republican society was markedly more empowered than in the ensuing postcolonial and apartheid periods.

Giliomee further explains, citing the examples of Afrikaner women's marches against the British government in 1844 (Natal Colony), again in 1871 (Transvaal Republic) and in 1914 (Second War for Freedom or Boer Rebellion), that Afrikaner women had autonomy outside and even within their marriages. Olive Schreiner also famously argued in *Women and Labour* (1911) that Boer women shared equally in the labour on the farms, were not parasites of society and produced goods by which they could acquire their own income by entering the labour economy.

With the rise of Afrikaner nationalism after the defeat of the Boer Republics in the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), women's position in society diminished. Giliomee explains that, "from the 1870s several developments, especially the introduction of primogeniture and urbanisation, undermined their position" (60). Fewer Afrikaner women than English women joined the fight for

[114] The Dutch descendants trekked into the interior of South Africa with their wagons to escape British rule in the Cape Colony. They desired to establish their own homeland or republic and to become self-governing.

enfranchisement that was finally granted by the government in 1930 (Vincent 1). Afrikaner nationalism was:

> built on the ideas of a patriarchal family and a fraternity or brotherhood of men. In this scheme of thought the traditions of the "forefathers" were passed down through the generations to young men who are deemed to be the heroic protectors of the women and of the purity of the nation. The women were seen as the reproducers of the nation and the protectors of tradition and morality. Men had the obligation to shield them from public controversy and embarrassment, while women had to concentrate on the welfare of their husband and children. (Giliomee 57)

Integral to the rise of Afrikaner nationalism was the dissemination of the ideology of the *volksmoeder* [mother of the nation]. The symbol or image of the *volkmoeder* and the attendant ideology cultivated a predominantly domestic ideal for women. Women were expected to be nurturers, mothers, wives; mostly confined to the domestic space. The historiography on Afrikaner women went through several stages and research foci; broadly speaking, it started with research that portrayed women as the passive 'receptors of Afrikaner nationalism' and developed to the point where it illustrated women's active participation, in some instances even more vociferously and actively than men, in the construction of Afrikaner identity and nationalism (Blignaut 596-617). Later research convincingly argued that Afrikaner women were also creators, defenders and proponents of *volksmoeder* ideology (Blignaut 596-617). Marijke du Toit, for example, asserts in "The Domesticity of Afrikaner Nationalism: Volksmoeders and the ACVV, 1904-1929" that the domestic became political for women. The Afrikaanse Christelike Vroue Vereniging [Afrikaans Christian Women's Society] (ACVV), established in 1904, was an organisation wholly conceptualised and administered by female members of the Dutch Reformed Church (a pillar of support and validation for the National Party and Afrikaner nationalism). Du Toit writes the following based on the minutes of meetings and publications by the ACVV:

> the ACVV's history shows the early involvement of nationalist-identified women in recasting ideals of womanhood. It demonstrates the entanglement of early Afrikaner nationalism with racially circumscribed philanthropic ventures through which women located themselves in an elaborated sphere of the domestic, and confirms the extent to which 'the woman question' was identified as a topic for discussion in early Afrikaner nationalist print culture. Moreover, the first three decades of the ACVV's existence also involved a significant shift in attitude towards how things womanly and domestic could relate to the 'public' and 'political'. From 1904 to around 1920 – as the ACVV established its philanthropic practice – its leaders would toe a careful line of acceptable femininity and

> independent organisation. From the early 1920s, more confident and assertive voices would seek to widen the boundaries of organised, female domesticity. (160)

However, as I will illustrate, some women – like Smit – suffered the consequences of restrictive gender norms and ideas concerning respectable femininity enforced by Afrikaner nationalism and internalised by some women. Irrespective of the assertive voices that emerged from women's organisations, women who pursued careers outside the professions deemed acceptable for women, according to the dominant discourse of the time, were regarded as wayward. Through self-regulation and ensuing self-chastisement based on what some women perceived as acceptable and normative behaviour, women internalised societal norms and experienced shame when they harboured desires not sanctioned by hegemonic culture. The formation of Smit's subjectivity, as I argue, was therefore influenced by her society's gender relations. In her letters, readers encounter her struggle to both resist and conform to perceived ideals of femininity. Smit, I suggest, might have created or manifested an other "I", Hessie, to embody thoughts and desires that Smit considered, through self-regulation, as socially unacceptable or as too wayward (and also, intriguingly, as too weak). This argument is advanced below.

Chris Blignaut writes that, "Afrikaner women internalised Afrikaner identity through reading Afrikaans books and magazines and involving themselves in women's organisations. [Isabel Hofmeyr] asserts that the internalisation of an Afrikaner identity must have been conveyed to the children these women were raising" (45). Although Afrikaans was only recognised as one of the two official state languages in 1925, Afrikaans was already used as a medium of instruction before its official state legislation. Even before its use as a language of instruction, newspapers began to use Afrikaans as their communication medium, and Afrikaans magazines and books appeared in print. From the 1870s onwards, the rise of Afrikaner nationalism developed alongside the Afrikaans language movements advocating an 'eie' [own] language for the Boer *volk*. Afrikaans print culture thus conveyed notions and ideals of Afrikaner nationalism women learned and taught to their daughters.[115]

[115] For more primary research on moral and cultural gatekeeping of women's behaviour and the kind of morality literature published for mothers and daughters, see pamphlets kept at the Stellenbosch University Library and Information Services Manuscripts Section such as J.R. Albertyn's "Ons Eie" – reeks [Our Own - series] (published roughly 1935-1945) or E. Pauw's *Wit Rose* [White Roses] (1922). These pamphlets, in my opinion, provide more than adequate evidence of what researchers have argued concerning Afrikaner nationalism and print culture.

Jonathan Hyslop in "White Working-Class Women and the Invention of Apartheid: 'Purified' Afrikaner Nationalist Agitation for Legislation against 'Mixed' Marriages, 1934-9" (1995) explains that the "psychological threat experienced by white men to their authority" in the 1940s, in response to the "Afrikaner female proletariat [that rose during the 1920s and 1930s] whose new-found independence threatened the patriarchal relations of white society" (60), caused men and politicians to frantically try and "re-establish [… Afrikaner] gender hierarchy" (60). He continues, "[w]hite men had very definite interests in maintaining their social, political and economic control over white women" (60). Afrikaner men's anxieties and efforts to subjugate women and confine them to the domestic space was a reality during the 1920-40s. The next chapter of this thesis reflects on the period of 1950-1980 and my research illustrates how effective the re-establishment of gender hierarchies, led by the National Party, were, and the long shadows these endeavours cast. The present chapter, however, illustrates that this particular gendered endeavour by a patriarchal Afrikaner society to control women with prescriptive norms infiltrated not only the general discourse on women but also women's internal conversations (in this case specifically Smit's) and adversely affected their ability to aspire to traditionally perceived 'masculine' professions or goals. Smit's inner dialogue with herself and her relational conversation with her wider and more immediate society becomes apparent when one reads her letters. The following section considers how Smit's inner conflicts with both herself and society are revealed in her life writing, and how this influenced the formation of her subjectivity. These letters, I suggest, are the primary life writing materials that became, in an edited form, *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan*. My discussion reflects on Smit's friendship and correspondence with Kalie Heese and the remarkable similarity between Smit's letters to Heese and Maria/Marié's letters addressed to the fictional 'Anna' in *Sekelmaan*. Finally, I suggest that *Sekelmaan* could be read/classified as autobiographical fiction, and I consider possible reasons why Smit chose a female confidante for *Sekelmaan's* Maria.

Gender, Anna and the Kalie Heese Letters: A Case for Reclassifying *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* as Autobiographical Fiction

In this section I use extracts from Smit's letters addressed to William Ewart Gladstone (W.E.G.) Louw, Ulrich Melanchton Gerryts and Karl Willem (Kalie) Heese[116] to provide textual support for

[116] The following biographical information is compiled from the website *Stellenbosch Writers* (2018). William Ewart Gladstone Louw (1913-1980) was a well-known and respected Afrikaans poet and considered as one of the first, or the first, *Dertiger* / 30s poet. He studied at the University of Cape Town,

my argument that *Sekelmaan* could be reclassified as autobiographical fiction. I first read Smit's letters addressed to Louw and Gerryts (held at the Stellenbosch University Library and Information Services' manuscripts section). As mentioned earlier, much of the letters' content led me to suspect that *Sekelmaan* was based on Smit's lived experiences or a 'true story'. But it was only after I studied the correspondence between Heese and Smit, housed at the National Afrikaans Literary Museum and Research Centre (NALN) in Bloemfontein, that I came to realise the extent to which *Sekelmaan* was autobiographical. As I have mentioned, the letters addressed to the fictional 'Anna' in *Sekelmaan* by Maria or Marié were almost exact replicas of letters originally sent to Heese. In this section of the chapter I relate the publication history of *Sekelmaan,* reflect on the autobiographical elements in the 'novel', and conduct a gender analysis of Smit's decision to exchange certain gender identities in the novel.

From the correspondence between Smit and W.E.G. Louw, it emerges that it was Louw who suggested Smit should publish her "kammabriewe"[117] [pseudo-letters] and other letters as a novel (also mentioned by Jerzy Koch ("Hettie Smit" 12)). Smit seemingly wrote many pseudo-letters addressed to Louw, or the fictional "Johan", although she never intended to send them to him or that he should ever read the content. In these letters, she confessed her feelings for Louw – I suspect that these pseudo-letters became the diary entries in the parts of the novel following the diary tradition. Amanda Botha expressed similar opinions elsewhere.[118] *Sekelmaan* then became the first

where he met Smit, and later completed his doctoral studies at the University of Amsterdam. He was a lecturer in Afrikaans and Dutch at Rhodes University in Grahamstown and later at Stellenbosch University (*Stellenbosch Writers* 2018). Ulrich Melanchton Gerryts (1907-1994) studied at Stellenbosch University and the University of Potchefstroom. He lectured at the Heidelberg Teaching College, wrote several textbooks on Afrikaans for primary school learners and published Afrikaans youth literature as well as some Afrikaans poetry (*Stellenbosch Writers* 2018). Karl Willem Heese (1910-1974) studied theology and psychology at Stellenbosch University. He worked as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, lectured in psychology at Stellenbosch University and later became a professor at the University of the Western Cape. In addition, he was a writer, famous for his advice column *Oom Kallie gee raad* [Oom Kalie gives advice], featured in the Afrikaans newspapers *Die Burger*, *Die Volksblad*, and *Die Oosterlig* (*Stellenbosch Writers* 2018). Heese was married to Hester Heese (neé de Swardt), an author of Afrikaans children's books. After Heese's death, his widow Hester published a collection of poignant reminiscences about their relationship in *Ek gooi my luike oop* [I open my shutters] (1986).

[117] H. Smit: SULISMS, Hettie Smit versameling 213 [collection 213] (HS collection 213). 4 June 1934. p. 5.

[118] My reason for suggesting that these pseudo-letters became the content of the parts the novel containing dairy entries stems from my research which necessitated reading all the correspondence of Smit, Louw and others regarding the publication of *Sekelmaan*. Louw offered to publish the pseudo-letters and as my research shows, the letters addressed to Anna were letters Smit wrote to Heese. Logically, the conclusion

publication of the Vereniging van die Vrye Boek [Association of the Free Book], a publishing initiative formed by W.E.G. Louw, his brother, respected poet N.P. van Wyk Louw (as well as Abraham Jonker, F.E.J. Malherbe, J. du P. Scholtz and I.W. van der Merwe), who copy edited and reviewed *Sekelmaan* for publication.[119] I do not know what prompted Smit to post the pseudo-letters she never intended to send, but she evidently did and Louw then offered to find a publisher. Smit wrote the following response:

> 19 Des 1934 [19 December 1934]
>
> Maar 'uitgee as jy kan! – Ek sou nie oor die Nobel prys so geëerd gevoel het nie. Daar is darem moeilikhede. Hessie sê al van die staanspoor af: sý is nie ′n 'inkpot' nie en ek moenie dink sy sal één jota of tittel [*sic*] van haar briewe verander nie en dis Johan se briewe en die tallose ander vriende maak nie vir haar saak nie. Maar hiervan hoef jy nie veel notisie te neem nie. Ek is self genoeg van ′n inkpot om jou naam verkeerd te spel in my belydenis. En op die ou end 'weet de schrywer dat het leven meer schuld is dan my alleen'. [*sic*] Maar Gladstone, die eise en seremonies wat altyd aan ′n 'boek' verbonde is... Wat gaan ek dit noem? 'Een waar verhaal' [?][120]
>
> [But 'publish if you can!' – I would not have felt more honoured by a nomination for the Nobel Prize. But there are difficulties. Hessie says from the get-go: *she* is no 'inkpot' and I shouldn't think that she will change *a single* dot or line of her letters because it is Johan's letters and the incalculable other friends do not matter. But of this you do not have to take any note. I am myself enough of an inkpot to misspell your name in my confession. And in the end 'the author knows that to life

would therefore be that the "kammabriewe" or pseudo-letters Louw offered to have published appeared as the diary entries written for 'Johan' in *Sekelmaan*. Neither of the archives I consulted had copies of the pseudo-letters written by Smit for or about Louw. Of note though is that Botha also wrote the following in an article which included the previously unpublished last chapter of *Sekelmaan*: "*Sy kom met die sekelmaan* was nooit ′n manuskrip nie. Dit was letterlik ′n 'bondel briewe'. Hettie Smit het hierdie 'kammabriewe' – haar eie verwysing daarna – op Prins Albert geskryf toe sy in 1935 en 1936 daar onderwys gegee het. In die briewe het die personasies Johan en Marié, wat sy later self 'karikature' sou noem, haar diepste verlangens verwoord. Die 'kammabriewe' was ook nie posbriewe nie, maar is in dagboekvorm gehou." [*She comes with the Sickle Moon* was never a manuscript. It was literally a 'bundle of letters'. Hettie Smit wrote these 'pseudo-letters' – her own term – at Prince Albert when she taught there in 1935 and 1936. In the letters the characters of Johan and Marié, whom she later called 'caricatures', verbalised her deepest desires. The 'pseudo-letters' also weren't post-letters, but were kept in diary form] (A. Botha: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Liefdesgeskrifte", *Rooi Rose,* Dn. 261/2003. February 2003. pp. 30-32.). Botha met Smit shortly before her death and Smit gave her permission to publish the last unpublished chapter of *Sekelmaan* upon the death of all the following people: W.E.G. Louw and his wife, and Smit and her husband. My reading of Smit's archive seems to lend credence to my and Botha's opinions expressed here considering the publication history of *Sekelmaan*.

[119] Van Wyk Louw also detailed this publication history of *Sekelmaan* in *Die Dokumente van Dertig* (1990).

[120] H. Smit: SULISMS, W.E.G. Louw versameling 158, [W.E.G Louw collection 158], Dn. 158.K.S.40 (13). 19 December 1934. p. 2.

> more is owed than to me alone'. But Gladstone, the expectations and ceremonies that always accompany a 'book' ... What am I going to call it? 'A true story'] (emphasis in original)

Scholars writing about *Sekelmaan* sometimes note the possibility that the novel might be autobiographical or that it is based on Smit's disappointed love for Louw (Kannemeyer *Geskiedenis* 463; Opperman 66; Hugo *Sekelmaan* 8; Koch *Outsider* 142; Opperman 346). The novel, however, has variously been canonised as a *Dertiger prosawerk* [1930s prose piece] (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 7-9; De Wet 72-94; Koch *Outsider* 135-143), been termed an epistolary and diary novel (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 3-7, Kannemeyer *Stem* 126-127, Koch *Outsider* 135), and is also considered as a "belydenisroman" [confessional novel] (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 10). However, no researcher has read the text or categorised it as autobiographical fiction. From the extract above, Smit regarded the 'novel' as "a true story"; hence, as partly autobiographical. The South African journalist Botha, who published articles in the Afrikaans literary magazine *Insig* (2001)[121] and later in the woman's magazine *Rooi Rose* (2003),[122] states that it is almost impossible to distinguish between the content of the letters Smit wrote to Louw and the published letters between the characters Maria and Johan. However, despite Botha's comments, it seems no scholars have read Smit's letters to draw extensive comparisons between the correspondence and the novel, which is indeed surprising, given that Kannemeyer (1990) and Koch ("Hettie Smit" 12) also make offhand mention of the similarities between some of Smit's letters and entries published in *Sekelmaan*.

I argue that Smit's *Sekelmaan* can also be read as autobiographical fiction and suggest that this new genre classification offers an opportunity to reinterpret Smit's text – a seminal South African female text. As Smit's letters reveal, many of the events and characters in the text were taken from her life and letters to manifest as thinly-veiled fictionalisations in her autobiographical fiction. Sections of *Sekelmaan*, for example, appear verbatim or almost verbatim in letters addressed to friends (as Botha also notes). In some instances, it is possible to see where she edited the original letters addressed to Kalie Heese for publication – mostly, she simply changed the names of people she referred to or wrote about. For example (see figures 12 and 13) she crossed out in pencil the names that appear in ink in the letters (Kalie, Gladstone, Hettie and Hessie) and changed these to

[121] A. Botha: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "'n Brief aan sy Bruid", *Insig*, Dn. 5294/2001. November 2001. pp. 66-67.
[122] A. Botha: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Liefdesgeskrifte", *Rooi Rose*, Dn. 261/2003. February 2003. pp. 30-32.

the character names featured in *Sekelmaan* (Anna, Johan, Maria and Marié). Indeed, as she teasingly attested in the above extract, she was enough of an author to "misspell" names in her "confession".

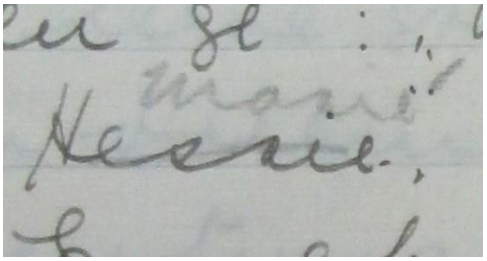

Figure 12 Hessie to Marié

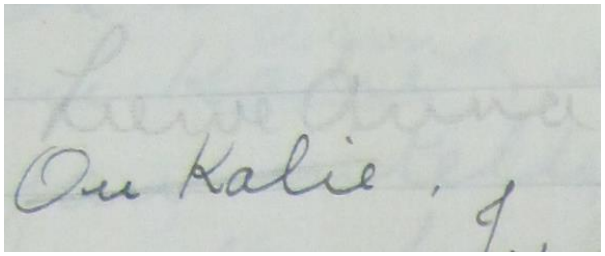

Figure 13 Kalie to Anna

This fictionalisation of the names shows that the autobiographical pact, discussed by Lejeune, is broken. The autobiographical pact is fulfilled when it is signified by the identical names of the author, narrator, and the protagonist, "for what defines autobiography for the one who is reading is above all a contract of identity, sealed by the proper name" (23). The broken pact thus signals the ambiguity of the narrative. This ambiguity and the blurring of genres would designate *Sekelmaan*, in line with contemporary scholarship, to the genre of autobiographical fiction. It would even be possible to argue that the book can be categorised as literary non-fiction, or a peculiar kind of epistolarium (Stanley "The Epistolarium" 201-235; Smith and Watson *Reading* 259, 273). One could even go as far as to say that *Sekelmaan* is a rather strange *published* collection of "unsent letters" and even use the scholarship around the "unsent letter" as genre to analyse the text. Genre, in terms of *Sekelmaan* then, is difficult to identity or define, given the hybridity of its form and the blending of different genres. Let me explain further: for a text to be considered as autobiographical fiction the protagonist, according to some theorists and with reference to the original definition of genre in 1977, must share the name of the author and must be written in the first person (Ferreira-Meyers 209). However, in her overview of the existing scholarship on autofiction and the problems with its genre classification, Karen Ferreira-Meyers "suggests that there might be versions of autofictions in which the proper name is masked by the use of a pseudonym" (209), as I suggest was the case with Smit in *Sekelmaan*. Meyers further explains that "[t]he word autofiction refers, according to various authors and critics, to very different realities. Everyone seems to use the term in his/her own way" (203). The one defining characteristic of the genre of autobiographical fiction, though, is the blurring of the boundaries between autobiography

and fiction; readers remain unsure of what is fictionalised and what is true in the author's story (Smith and Watson *Reading* 259-260).[123]

I *prefer* to use the term autobiographical fiction, say, instead of autofiction, for *Sekelmaan*, but would not disagree with any scholar who decides to place Smit's text in any of the aforementioned subgenres of life writing. Two reasons inform my choice: firstly, to state that *Sekelmaan* is in fact an autobiography would invite readers to engage the text as such, which presupposes that they would expect the protagonist, narrator and author to resemble the 'real life' (Lejeunne 23) version of Hettie Smit, which it does not. In my view, autobiography would not be an accurate term because, as a literary writer, she used expressive metaphors and poetic imagery in her letters to convey emotion and feeling unrelated to how she would 'act' or speak in real life. As creative writer she might also have been prone to fictionalise or embellish events in her life writing. Secondly, although *some* letters to friends were published almost verbatim with little revision, her letters were 'literary' and *did* undergo numerous edits before publication. Letter writing as a form of both creative and practical writing was Smit's preferred genre of writing and she stated that she also preferred authors' letters or diaries to their fiction, especially Katherine Mansfield's diary.[124] In a letter written to Gerryts, Smit expressed the following opinion: "vir my is ′n Brief mooier as ′n boek" [I find a letter to be more beautiful than a book]. Her letters were originally written as a creative and confessional endeavour and would therefore assign *Sekelmaan*'s genre more towards literary non-fiction or a kind of epistolarium (Stanley "The Epistolarium" 201-235),[125] and not autobiography. Furthermore, Smit told journalist F.J. Pretorius in 1948 in an interview "dat driekwart van die boek pure verdigsel [was]" [that three quarters of the book [was] pure fabrication][126] and that "[a]rt is exaggeration". She might have admitted to friends in letters that *Sekelmaan* was 'autobiographical' but in public to a journalist she said that it was fabrication. To

[123] Smith and Watson explain that the term "autofiction" is used "in France for autobiographical fiction" (*Reading* 259). They do not distinguish between the terms 'autofiction' and 'autobiographical fiction'. Taking my cue from them, I too do not distinguish between the terms. My use of autobiographical fiction instead of autofiction then is motivated by personal preference and my efforts remind readers of both aspects of autofiction: the autobiographical and the fictional.
[124] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 28 December 1933. pp. 5-6.
[125] I refer to *Sekelmaan* as a kind of epistolarium because even in its published form it is a collection of letters. As I have mentioned before, the diary entries in *Sekelmaan* were most probably extracted from the pseudo-letters Smit wrote to Louw. Thus, in its entirety, the novel is a sort of collection of letters.
[126] S.J. Pretorius: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "′n Besoek by Hettie Smit van die 'Sekelmaan'", *Die Ruiter*. 6 February 1948.

my mind, the text was both. My use of the term autobiographical fiction therefore signals an acknowledgement that Smit never intended to publish these letters but that the collection was presented as/read as fiction when it was published; that these letters, and by extension *Sekelmaan*, are of creative and 'literary value'; hence, the reader should not make the mistake of assuming that all that appears in *Sekelmaan* actually 'happened' or is 'true'. Moreover, the fictional and creative features evident in her written letters to friends later appeared in *Sekelmaan*. Although these letters were written by a real person, they still contain *fictional* elements. I acknowledge that truth is a precarious term to use, but think the term 'autobiographical fiction' guards against dangerous reading because it reminds readers of the real *and* fictional elements in the text. E.H. Jones states that "[a]utofiction, as opposed to autobiography, then, is highly attuned with an age in which the subject is no longer accepted to be a unified, simple whole" (177). My use of the term autobiographical fiction indicates that I pay attention to Smit as a writer who employed multiple "I"s and considered herself to be a "gesplete wese" [bifurcated being] and not a unified Cartesian subject or universal masculine "I". I return to these final points further on in this chapter.

It should be noted here that (particularly women's) autobiography and/or autobiographical fiction was not considered as literature or investigated by literary scholars as literary texts until the 1970s (McNeill viii). This would account for the oversight in Afrikaans literary scholarship to engage with the text as autobiographical fiction. Indeed, illustrating the aversion of scholars to admit to autobiographical fictionalisation in novels before the 1970s, D.J. Opperman sternly warned, after mentioning W.E.G. Louw's friendship with Smit in *Digters van Dertig* [Poets of the Thirties] (1953), that "'n mens moet uiters versigtig wees met jou gevolgtrekkings, want dit is in die eerste plek 'n kunswerk en *geen* historiese dokument nie [one should be very cautious about one's assumptions because the book is first and foremost an artwork and *not* an historical document] (my emphasis 66). More important, though, than questioning scholars' reticence towards accepting autobiography as texts meriting literary inquiry, is that Smit's letters to both Gerryts and Louw indicate that she considered her novel as 'autobiographical'. She disclosed the following to Louw in a letter:

> Maar Gladstone, die Maan bly nog my Brief aan jóú, en nie ′n boek nie. En wat hulle ook mag sê of wat ook daarmee mag gebeur, jý moet dit nie by jou slim boeke hou nie, maar in die blik trommeltjie by ander outydse goeterkies bewaar.[127]
>
> [But Gladstone, the Moon is still my Letter to *you*, and not a book. And whatever they may say or whatever happens to it, *you* must not place it with your clever books, but guard it with your other old knickknacks in a small tin chest.] (emphasis in original)

Based on the excerpt above, I highlight three important points that guide my analysis of Smit's life writing for the remainder of this chapter. Firstly, Smit declared *Sekelmaan* partly autobiographical by stating that it was a "Letter" to Louw, and not a book. Secondly, she revealed insecurities and anxieties as both author and person by stating that her text was not 'clever', a point I return to below. Finally, she considered her text as "outyds" [old-fashioned] or sentimental – a criticism that contemporary scholars and the critics of the 1930-50s levelled at the tone and style of *Sekelmaan*. Smit asked Louw to "bewaar" (that is, guard, preserve, keep safe or take very good care of) her book, together with other things he considered precious or of sentimental value since these kinds of items are usually what people store in old boxes and chests. Her 'sentimental' writing cost her the prestigious Hertzog award, but more importantly, her own awareness of the dangers of making public the private and the criticism of her sentimental 'female' writing she anticipated, even before publication, caused severe inner turmoil. These apprehensions, I suggest through my examination of her letters, might further have led to her questioning the value of her writing and impeded her ability to claim authorship.

In the following extract, taken from a letter written around 1935 to Gerryts, Smit expressed self-awareness of the act of writing. In the extract below, she appeared critical of her creative ability and conveyed an understanding of the complexities of constructing a narrative based on personal confession that demanded concealment of the autobiographical impulse:

> Sien jy wat ek bedoel? Dat ek uiteindelik insien hoe eng, hoe egosentries my kamtige 'roman' is, omdat dit nie in die eerste plek ′n roman is nie, maar goed ′n eie belydenis, ′n voorwendsel vir myself, vir ′n liefde wat nog vir my, en nie ek vir hom, beheers nie. Ek weet dat alle romans min of meer outobiografies is, maar ook dat die skrywer (as hy ′n goeie een is) homself soos ′n stuk klei op sy hand kan hou,

[127] H. Smit: SULISMS, W.E.G. Louw collection 158, Dn. 158.K.S.40 (18). 8 November 1935. p. 2.

> en vervorm soos hy wil. Ek is nog nie die klei se baas nie, daarom die fanatiese rhetoriek [...][128]
>
> [Do you see what I mean? That I finally understand how insular, how egocentric my quasi 'novel' is, because it is, in the first instance, not a novel but a personal/my own confession, a pretext for myself, for a love that still controls me, and not me him/it. I know that all novels are more or less autobiographical, but also that the author (if he is a good one) can hold himself as if a piece of clay in his own hand, and shape himself as he wants. I am not yet the master of the clay, and therefore the fanatical rhetoric.]

What emerges from this extract is Smit's anxieties regarding writing, possibly caused by entering the Afrikaans literary male-dominated arena of the 1930s, as I suggest further on. She also referred in other letters to her "onryp"[129] [immature or 'unripe'] style, approach, and themes which she regarded as too feminine or on the "plein van dom-vroulike onbewustheid" [130] [level of dim-womanly ignorance]. Further evidence of the male-dominated literary arena in which she operated is that Smit, an author in her own right, referred to a writer as 'he' and 'himself' and even attributed the emotion 'love' with a masculine pronoun. Because the writing was, according to her, personal and autobiographical, it not only reflected on her as writer, but also on her as a woman. Criticism of her published work was therefore experienced as not only criticism of her writing, but also as personal attacks (see Kannemeyer's *Die Dokumente van Dertig* [The Documents of the Thirties] (1990) for an example of Smit's reaction to F.E.J. Malherbe's commentary and review of her manuscript).[131] Noteworthy in the above extract is that she told Gerryts that her writing was "egocentric", "insular" and a "pretext" to write about her own love and loss and that she was not "the master of the clay", thus not a good writer. Her doubt concerning her written work is evident

[128] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. No date but approximately penned in 1935. p. 4.
[129] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 5 August 1933. p. 1.
[130] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 6 September 1933. p. 8.
[131] Smit frequently referred in her correspondence with friends to Malherbe's harsh criticism of her work. To clarify, she sent him extracts from what was to become *Sekelmaan* to ask for input and advice. Apart from Smit's mention that his feedback was discouraging, I am not sure what exactly his replies to her contained. However, Kannemeyer includes extracts from Malherbe's feedback as one of the reviewers of *Sekelmaan* before its publication (*Dokumente* 45-51). Malherbe's criticism of *Sekelmaan* was so harsh that Van Wyk Louw had to rubber out the pencil notes in the margins of the manuscripts before returning the document to Smit (45-48). Unfortunately, she could still decipher what he wrote. For example, he used the following words and phrases to describe the manuscript and its style: "maanmalheid", "banaal", "sieklike selfbejammering", "bakvisverliefdheid", "niksbeduidende satire", "gesanik", and "[m]isluk op die duur" which, loosely translated mean; moon-madness, banal, sickly self-pity, childish love, empty satire, moaning, entirely unsuccessful (*Dokumente* 45). Smit did not pull any punches though and wrote a scathing letter to Malherbe to refute his statements and called him a few unsavory names to boot (48-51).

from the extract. However, the extract also signals an almost hyper-awareness of the intricacies of constructing a literary text. She stated, for example, that although good authors draw on their own experiences, and that they can "shape" their reality like a "piece of clay" to produce great fictional works. Smit's self-awareness of the requirements of creating literary works in her capacity as aspiring author thus also emerges in the above extract. Her issue was not necessarily the autobiographical elements contained in literature, but the amount of skill required of an author to translate a personal lifeworld with aesthetic and technical style to become literature.

Ingrid Glorie, in "Sterke vrouwen! De institutionele positie van de eerste Afrikaanse schrifjsters [Strong women! The institutional position of the first women writers in Afrikaans] (Glorie's translation, 2005), illustrates that although many of the texts and books written by Afrikaans women were well received, they were (and in some cases still are) excluded from the Afrikaans literary canon because of theme and content. Reviews about these texts (by for example Eva Walters, Mabel Jansen and Anna de Villiers), mostly by male reviewers, often stated that although the authors had potential, their themes were too narrow, lacked complexity and in some cases, reviewers even suggested that their husbands' might have written the books. Texts written by these women mostly investigated social issues such as the poor white question and the potential of Afrikaans (rural or *boer*) morality being corrupted by urban influences (relating back to the work they did for women's organisations). Other critiques suggested that the content was too one-dimensional in its focus on social concerns in the books followed a moralistic tradition (39-57). Glorie further explains that the critics in the 1920s and 1930s started to distinguish between 'high' and 'low' literature, between genre literature and 'worthwhile' literature, as more and more Afrikaans texts were being produced. The effect was that women's novels, written in the realist style, were relegated to the margins with other "triviale" [trivial] (55) writings.

In the 1930s, when Smit's text was published, Afrikaans literature was a male-dominated arena and the noted 'literary figures' were men, such as C.M. van den Heever, D.F. Malherbe, Mikro, C.J. Langenhoven, C. Louis Leipoldt, Jochem van Bruggen, I.D. du Plessis, Sangiro, Uys Krige and the still iconic Louw brothers, the poets N.P. van Wyk Louw and W.E.G. Louw.[132] With

[132] The male dominated literary arena of the early twentieth century was not unique to South Africa but a global reality. Although men dominated the *literary* arena and received public recognition for their fictional works, many Afrikaans women's Anglo-Boer war diaries were published in the decades after the war and were widely read by the public (see Van Heyningen (1999) in this regard). Many of these diaries were and

knowledge of this background and with an awareness of the scathing critiques written by male reviewers of women's writing, Smit published her 'sentimental', confessional and experimental female narrative. Publishing such an unusual and experimental text in this time and given the confessional style she employed as woman author entering a male-dominated literary arena demonstrates a certain strength of character and the conviction she finally must have felt for the literary merit of *Sekelmaan*. But, an alertness to possible criticism, especially male criticism and critique from Afrikaner society, permeated her own writing. Any reader of her letters, for example, can notice the harsh self-criticism Smit voiced towards her own creative writing. I propose that this self-criticism stemmed from her exposure to broader patriarchal, societal and literary scrutiny. For example, in a letter to Ulrich Gerryts (6 September 1933) she wrote the following about her creative work and the possibility of publishing:

> Weet jy as ek die stoflike oorblyfsels van daardie briewe-gesanik deurblaai dan kan ek op my rug val dat ek ooit soiets [*sic*] kan geskryf het (behalwe die kleinste Hessie briefies); en ek dink nou dat ek tog sonder Dr. Fransie self geweldige teësin sou kry in die aanhou met so ′n sielkundige verskriklikheid.[133]
>
> [You know, when I page through the material remains of that letter-botheration I can't believe that I could have ever written such a thing (with the exception of the smallest Hessie letters); and I now think that even without Dr. Fransie I would have developed a strong aversion to the continuation of such a psychological dreadfulness.]

Her self-reflexive criticism, evident in the extract above (and in many other letters) caused anxiety in her personal life and revealed specific insecurities about her right to authorship. For example, note that Smit referred here to her creative writing or 'letters' as a "gesanik" [botheration, nagging, excessive complaining], described it as "remains" (as though it was a 'dead' or abandoned project) and considered the content of her work as a "psychological dreadfulness" she herself might also

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still are reprinted in revised editions (see for example *Ons Japie: Die Oorlogdagboek van Anna Barry* (2016) recently edited by Ena Jansen). Johanna Brandt's war diary, *Het Concentratie-kamp van Irene*, later *Die Kappie Kommando* (1905,1912,1913 and 1958) and the various editions and languages in which it the latter was published attests to this phenomenon. Diaries, however, were not considered 'literature' by Afrikaans literary scholars until recent decades, as was the case in literary departments across the world. Other writings by women includes the work of journalists (such as Mabel Malherbe, Johanna Brandt (Moeder Vernuf) and Maria Elizabeth Rothmann (M.E.R.)) in the 1920s and 1930s and women who wrote children's literature, such as M.E.R. and Johanna Brandt. Elisabeth Eybers' first two collections of poetry were also published in the 1930s and by the late 1940s M.E.R. was widely known and acknowledged as a writer by the general public.

[133] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 6 September 1933. p. 7.

eventually have been critical of. Enveloping this opinion expressed by Smit is the presence of the male Afrikaans literary critic, F.E.J. (Fransie) Malherbe, to whom she sent her work, and who did not favourably respond to her creative writing (as the correspondence between Smit, Gerryts and Heese reveals). Of further importance is that she used two diminutives in the five words contained in the parenthesis of a sentence to describe the parts of her work she still found agreeable. This use in effect undermines or 'belittles' the expressed approval: "kleinste" [smallest] is shortly followed by "briefies", which directly translates as 'small letters'. The parenthesis, directly translated, would therefore read: "except for the smallest little Hessie letters". Smit's expression of self-approval is thus tentative and her tone, as well as choice of words indicates hesitance or even shame to profess that she liked some of her own creative writing. However, the Afrikaans diminutives "ie", "tjie" or "kie" are also used to indicate sentimentality or to express endearment for someone or something and could thus simply be an expression of fondness. Yet, I think the tautology (two diminutives so close together), the content of the rest of the excerpt quoted above and the entirety of the letter not quoted here, indicate Smit's hesitation in expressing approval of her creative endeavours.

Smit's initial response to Fransie Malherbe's criticism was that of resignation (see footnote 38). However, two years later, in a letter to Gerryts, she lashed out at Malherbe for his inability to understand her work and accused him of sexism. She angrily derided him as a "wipneus" [snub nose] (meant as an insult) and "intellektuele snob" (intellectual snob) and further wrote to Gerryts:

> Dat hy sommer ′n man is, en wat weet so ′n skepsel nou van die Hessie-begrip, en sy verregaande betekenis. Ek word regtig weer bitsig. Wag dat ek ophou. [134]
>
> [That he is just a man, and what can such a creature know about the Hessie-concept, and its extroadinary meaning. I am becoming catty again. Wait let me stop.]

Smit herself identified the sexism of some in the Afrikaans literary arena (in this instance Malherbe) as an obstacle she had to overcome in order to write in the way she wanted to. And yet, it seems that the effect this had on her sense of self-worth was devastating. The anger expressed at Malherbe's sexism illustrates that she was not blind to the gender inequality in her society and struggled to simply accept it. But, she promptly silenced herself (even in *private* correspondence) when she expressed anger towards perceived sexism by stating: "let me stop". It appears that she

[134] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 1935. p. 11.

was troubled by her anger and felt uncomfortable with being "catty". Self-regulation in response to dominant societal discourses that expected female silence that manifested in her letters was counterbalanced by anger at the androcentrism of her society; clearly, tensions underwrote the shaping of her subjectivity.

To lend credence to my argument that phallocentric Afrikaner society influenced Smit's subjectivity and was the root of her self-doubt concerning the value of her writing, I now discuss her choice to change the gender of the male addressee of her 'real-life' letters, Kalie Heese, to a female addressee in the novel, namely 'Anna'. Smit's choice to change 'Kalie' to 'Anna', I argue, illustrates her cognizance of Afrikaner language and culture as phallogocentric. Phallogocentrism's "binary logic privileges the masculine, through the 'transcendental signifier' of the phallus. The term 'phallus' refers not simply to the male organ but to the power accrued to its possessor in language and in culture" (Benstock, Ferriss and Woods 167). To borrow an image from Gilbert and Gubar, the pen, the act of writing, is historically speaking phallic. I view Smit's 'gender change' of one of her characters in *Sekelmaan* as indicator of a subject significantly aware of her body and societal meanings assigned to it who relationally negotiated her identity with her environment. Feminist theorists and gender studies scholars base their critical work on the premise that "[h]istorically, women have been determined by their bodies: their individual awakenings and actions, their pleasure and their pain compete with representations of the female body in larger social frameworks" (Conboy, Medina and Stanbury 1). In agreement with these scholars, I propose that Smit's female body in Afrikaner society predetermined her gendered 'I' and assigned her specific roles and attributes. Smit's body marked her in her society as symbolically inferior, as a woman, and in her audacious attempt to enter the male sphere through writing, readers of her letters notice how she negotiates this entry. By constantly self-reflexively judging herself (relationally) through the opinions and ideology of a larger society, Smit started to judge her writing as less, or not "clever", or to use her own words: she thought her writing was on the "level of dim-womanly ignorance". Eventually, the internalisation of patriarchal gender norms by Smit caused her to question the validity of her 'female' and emotional style of writing. Furthermore, she employed the reigning gender biases of the patriarchal literary field in judging her own work. I illustrate that she struggled (yet purposefully strove) to accept that her writing had merit because it was a particular form of 'female writing'.

To demonstrate the 'sentimental' and confessional style of Smit's letters (and by extension *Sekelmaan*), I quote at length extracts from a letter written to Heese (18 May 1932). This particular letter titled "In die Put" [In the Well] is interesting because none of the other letters addressed to Heese are titled. To title a letter might signal the authorial intent of Smit to present this as a short story, or literary "verdigsel" [fabrication] rather than a conventional letter. This letter addressed to "Kalie ou maat" [Kalie my old friend] closely resembles the letter to "Anna, ou Maat" [Anna, my friend] (55) in *Sekelmaan* under the entry "Kaapstad – 23 September". There are subtle differences between the two letters and I comment in footnotes on some editorial revisions that are of interest. The intent here is not to analyse this extract, but to provide readers with a lengthy sample of Smit's 'sentimental' writing.

Kaapstad 18/5/32

> [...] Ek het vir Gladstone somarso [*sic*] terloops raak geloop eendag en hom op ′n ander dag terloops liefgekry, en moes van toe af elke dag al sy goedige kalm vriendelikheid in my bedel-bakkie versamel en sing-sing die straat daarmee afstap ... Oulap twee oulap vandag! Hoe! Hoe ryk is ek nie vandag nie! Jy glimlag en ek kan jou vergewe. Wat gaan dit jou eintlik aan? So ′n doodgewone ou storietjie gebeur op elke straathoek dag na dag en elkeen het sy eie sorge. [...] Ek sê dit nie as ′n verwyt nie. Ek sê dit om jou te wys waarom ek so lank stil gebly het, waarom ek nie met jou kan simpatiseer nie, waarom ek nou met niks kan simpatiseer nie – behalwe met hulle wat liefhet – Nie die groot onselfsugtige intellektuele liefde nie, maar die groot primitiewe passieliefde wat blind is en niks onteien nie [.] Nie myne alleen meer nie – maar Hessie s'n [...] jy wandel daarbo in die sonskyn, en ek is onder in die put. In ′n put sien ′n mens net put-mure. ′n Mens hoor net put-geluide ′n mens ruik net put-geure. ′n Mens voel net put-goeters. ′n Mens dink net put-gedagtes. [...] Mý liefde het vir my ′n obsessie geword. Ek het gehoor van mense wat mal word daavan. So ′n put kan inkrimp en nouer word somtyds. [...] In en deur en tot hom bestaan alles wat vir my bestaan. Ek haat hom omdat hy my verkleineer, ek het hom lief omdat ek hom vrees soos ′n slaaf.[135] As ek by hom is, is ek nederig en gedweë en ′n ja-broer. Ons stry nooit meer oor kuns of oor godsdiens nie. Ek het nie meer argumente nie. "Ja baas, dis waar baas, ja baas." So sê my oë en my houding maar gedurig by hom. Hy vind my flou en soutloos en slap soos ′n stuk lap. Hy kom baie selde hier. Ons gaan nooit meer stap nie. Al ons mooi vriendskap is weg. [...][136] Ek haat hulle met die giftigste vrouehaat. Ek kan op my knieë bid vir

[135] In *Sekelmaan* this sentence reads: "Ek haat hom, en ek het hom lief soos ′n slaaf sy meester [I hate him, and I love him like a slave loves his master] (57). The letter stated that she hated him because he humiliated ["verkleineer"]" her. The Afrikaans "verkleineer" in this instance not only indicates humiliation, but also literally 'to make smaller'. She thus stated that he, and her love for him, made her 'less' – diminished her. Furthermore, she wrote in the letter that she feared, not loved him, "like a slave".

[136] To clarify the next section of this letter where she writes about hatred, Smit wrote about W.E.G. Louw's friendship with Fred le Roux and how she blamed Le Roux for taking Louw from her.

> hulle ongeluk. En voor hulle moet ek glimlag en saam intellektuele nikse saamklets. Poësie, poësie! Ek haat poësie en Kuns en musiek! Ek haat dit alles omdat dit my wegstoot uit sy lewe en my bedel-bedel by sy agterdeur laat staan. […] "Dis nie-Gladstone-nie." […] – "Hessie"[137]

> [[…] By pure chance I one day encountered Gladstone and casually came to love him another day, and since then I daily had to collect his good-natured calm friendliness in my begging bowl and walk down the street with it singing … Penny, two pennies today! How! How rich am I [not] today! You [Kalie] smile and I can forgive you. How does it actually concern you? Such an ordinary old tale happens day after day on every street corner and everyone has their own tribulations. […] I am not saying this as a regret. I am saying this to show why I stayed quiet for so long, why I can't sympathise with *you*, why I can no longer sympathise with *anything* – except with those who love – Not the great unselfish intellectual love, but the great primitive passion-love that is blind and dispossesses nothing[.] Not mine alone anymore – but also Hessie's […] you stroll up there in the sunshine, and me down here in the hole/well. In a well one only sees well-walls. One only hears well sounds and only smells well-odours. One only feels well-things. One thinks only well-thoughts. […] My love has become an obsession for me. I have heard of people going mad from it. Such a well could sometimes shrink and become narrower. […] For from him and through him and for him all things for me exist. I hate him because he humiliates me [(makes me less)], and I love him because I fear him, like a slave. If I am with him, I am humble and tractable and a yes-brother. We never argue about art or religion anymore. I don't have any more arguments. "Yes master, that's true master, yes master." Thus my eyes and comportment frequently convey when with him. He experiences me as tepid and bland and limp like a piece of cloth. He seldom comes here. We never go for walks anymore. Our entire beautiful friendship is gone. I hate them with virulent female-hatred. On my knees, I could pray for their demise.[138] In front of them I have to smile and join conversations about intellectual nothings. Poetry, poetry! I hate poetry and Art and music! I hate it all because it pushes me out of his life and brings me begging to his backdoor. […] "It is not-Gladstone." […] Hessie

For the entire duration of the correspondence between Smit and Heese he was in a happy and committed relationship with Hester de Swardt, the woman he later married. Smit usually sent her greetings to Hester in these letters. Their friendship was never anything but platonic. One could propose that Smit chose to change 'Kalie' to 'Anna' in an effort to protect his identity. No one would, or did, guess that the real recipient of the letters written to Anna was male. The public and

[137] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/6. 18 May 1932. pp. 1-15.

[138] In *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan* this sentence was edited to read: "Ek haat hulle albei, met die giftigste vrouehaat. Ek haat hulle soos Dido vir Eneas gehaat het. [I hate them both, with the most virulent female-hatred. I hate them like Dido hated Aeneas] (58). The possibility of public outrage from a parochial and staunchly religious Afrikaner society when reading that a woman wanted to pray for the "demise" of men she hated possibly prompted Smit's editorial choice here.

academic speculation surrounding the personages involved in *Sekelmaan* never extended to a consideration of 'Anna's' 'real' identity. The hypothesis that the name Kalie was changed to Anna to protect Heese's identity would be feasible if not for the fact that Heese later publicly claimed in a published interview that he was 'Anna' of *Sekelmaan*.[139] I therefore surmise that there was more to the 'gender change' than an attempt on Smit's part to protect Heese's identity. My suggestion is, as I have outlined above, that her letters reveal apprehensions caused by internal criticism of her authorial 'I' and her perceived 'presumption' in a patriarchal society to become an author. In another letter to Heese, for example, she wrote the following in a postscript:

> Brandfort Feb 32 - N.S. Daardie skrywe van jy [*sic*] en Hessie oor allerhande nietighede moet jy asb. gou uitrubber en vergeet – al is dit om my nie so baie daarvan te laat droom nie hoor. H.[140]
>
> [Brandfort Feb 32 - P.S. Those writings between you and Hessie regarding nonsensical nothings you should please rubber out and forget – even if only to provide me with peace of mind, okay? H.]

Smit, as already illustrated in the previous extract, wrote affective and sensitive letters to Heese, and yet, on numerous occasions she requested in subsequent letters that he should destroy the letters for her "peace of mind". Heese is not the only addressee whom Smit begged to destroy her previous writings. She wrote similar letters to Louw and Gerryts. It seems she was often embarrassed by supposed 'female' or 'emotional' outbursts in her writing. Even in her personal writing, she seems aware of possible criticism. In the previous letter I quoted, from Smit to Heese, she stated that she knows Heese is "smiling" while reading about her heartache.

The question arises: why would Smit be so embarrassed by sending letters with affecting content to friends? The prevailing morality of her society might provide answers. For example, in *Wit Rose* [White Roses] (1922), an instruction manual written for young girls on acceptable and moral behaviour, E. Pauw stated that it was better and safer for a woman to abstain completely from writing to young men. Pauw further noted that if a young woman corresponded with a young man, the letters should not be secret. Parents should be allowed to read these, so that the content itself could be censored and regulated (22). Furthermore, Pauw also warned that young girls should not

[139] J. Kruger: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Haar jeugvriend Kalie Heese vertel... Die geheim agter Hettie Smit se boek.". No further information available.
[140] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/2. February 1932. p. 1.

read anything "[wat] die gevoel [kan] prikkel en opgewondenheid veroorsaak" [that might stimulate feeling and cause excitement] (24), insinuating that books might caused sexual excitement or too much emotion and should be avoided. Smit, as subject, was interpellated by Afrikaner moral ideology and tradition. At the time, the content of her letters was surely of a nature that one would keep private and hidden from parents. The correspondence between Heese and Smit definitely elicited 'feeling' and 'excitement', albeit not of a sexual but rather emotional nature. As mentioned in the historical overview, Afrikaans print culture, of which a large portion was morality literature, was read and internalised by mothers and passed on to daughters. Smit herself read widely and must have been aware of attitudes about what was considered acceptable correspondence between young men and women. As the following extract illustrates, Smit was painfully aware of her society and what women could and could not do.

In a letter to Heese in 1932, Smit detailed her perceptions of "female shame" and the "inhibition[s]" inherent in her own writing. Parts of this letter is published in *Sekelmaan* under the heading "Rietvlei – Oktober" [Rietvlei – October] (124-127), but the section I want to analyse was omitted from *Sekelmaan*. Gilbert and Gubar state that "[i]n order to define herself as author the female author must redefine the terms of her socialization" (49). In my opinion, the following extract highlights Smit's "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar 45) because she herself was co-opted to a certain degree by patriarchy:

> 15 Des 1932 – Brandfort
>
> [...] Dis vir my of ek nou eindelik daar gekom het waar ek nog al die jare heen gegroei het: die besef dat ek wat ek is, maar net op papier mág, en kan lewe. Dat ek my geluk moet vind in my kammabriewe aan die volmaakte kammamens: Gladstone. Hessie sal waarskynlik een van die dae met ′n vet skeeloog boer trou en koskook [*sic*] en kouse stop en kind oppas. Maar ek sal ′n bruilof-op-papier hou en my trouring sal wees ... ′n pen. (Hy't darem tog ook ′n goue rand tog nie?) [...] Nou kan ek dweep en vereer en aanbid soveel as ek wil sonder die valse tradisionele vroulike skaamte en terughouding sonder die berekende inhibisie sonder die lamlendige aan die slaap [?] [...] Van dat die moontlikheid vir ′n Hessie-vervulling dood is is al die oneerlikheid weg, en kan ek my liefde laat groei en bloei in my kammabriewe soos ′n blom in die son. Ek is daar so trots op soos ′n ouer oor sy kind. Ek kan sing-sing by Gladstone verby stap met my [?] ryk kammabriewe, en ek kan hom dit self laat lees – met ′n simpatieke neerbuigende [?] begrip: hy vang dit tog nie dis vir hom Grieks. [...] Dis eintlik verfrissend om weer te kan lewe. ′n Mens lewe tog net as jy kan gee, as jyself kan liefhê. As jy jou liefde kan formuleer,

> as jy in jou liefde kan skep. [...] Ek pas nou eenmaal nie in "die lewe nie". Net Hessie is daar populêr. [141]
>
> [It is for me as if I have finally come to where I have been growing for the past few years: the realisation that I who am I, can and may only live on paper. That I have to find my happiness only in my pseudo-letters [written] to the perfect pseudo-person: Gladstone. Hessie will probably marry a fat squint-eyed farmer one of these days, cook and darn socks and care for a child. But I shall have a wedding-on-paper and my wedding ring shall be … a pen. (It has a gold lining, doesn't it?) […] Now I can dote and venerate and worship as much as I want without the false traditional female shame and reserve without the calculated inhibition without the wretched being asleep [?] […] Since the possibility of a Hessie-fulfilment/realisation is dead all the dishonesty has vanished, and I can allow my love to grow and bloom in my pseudo-letters like a flower in the sun. I am as proud about it as a parent about a child. I can walk past Gladstone singing with my [?] rich pseudo-letters, and I can even let him read it – with a sympathetic patronising [?] grasp: he does not understand it, it is Greek to him. […] It is actually invigorating to be able to live again. One only lives if one can give, if you can love. If you can formulate love, if you can create love. […] I just do not fit into 'the world and life'. Only Hessie is popular there.

Returning to Gilbert and Gubar's arguments (3-7), one notes in this extract that she used masculine pronouns for "pen", echoing her references to writers in a previous extract as male ("he"). Masculine pronouns for "pen" and "writer" signal Smit's conscious or unconscious depiction of the act of writing as masculine. Smit appears to resolve the metaphorical problem of a woman claiming ownership or possession of the pen: thus, becoming 'father' of the text, "a master or ruler" (Gilber and Gubar 7) of what she creates. She stated in the above extract that what she is "may" and "can" only be possible on paper and that a part of her could only live and be alive on paper. This "I" is the "I" that wrote, the "I" that "creat[ed]" and "formula[ted]" love (for example). The authoring "I" claimed ownership of written texts here by stating that she would marry on paper and that the pen would be her wedding band. This further distinguished her from the other "I", Hessie, in the real world, who might have married a fat farmer and spent her days pursuing conventional female tasks. After distancing this "I" from the one who "fit[ted]" into the world and who managed to be "popular" 'there', she stated that she finally had the freedom to: "dote and venerate and worship as much as I want without the *false traditional female shame* and *reserve* without the *calculated inhibition* without the wretched being asleep" (my emphasis). Thus, Smit herself realised that her authorial "I" was self-consciously crafted. The society in which she lived

[141] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/27. 15 December 1932. pp. 1-8.

became the audience for the writing "I" and "inhibit[ted]" her. For Smit it seems, to claim ownership as woman writer and to be proud of her writing, she had to distinguish and consciously differentiate between her "I"s. This "I" and other "I" are therefore the focus in the following section.

Returning to the issue of 'gender change' in her published work (Kalie to Anna), I propose that it directly relates to Smit's "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar 45), as revealed in the extract and discussion above. Her awareness of the public audience of her time, evident in her (private) letters to friends, seemingly caused such pronounced and almost palpable angst that I think it probable that she opted to rather change 'Kalie' to 'Anna' because she feared public scrutiny of her as woman/person and her as woman writer. The kind of very intimate letter Smit wrote to friends such as Heese and Gerryts, particularly given that they were not in romantic relationships with Smit, could have been perceived as improper by the gendered social norms of Afrikaner society. After Smit's death, Heese himself revealed to journalist Joan Kruger that he was in fact Anna from *Sekelmaan,* and that he served as Smit's "biegvader" [confessor] in real life. Heese explained to the journalist:

> Ons het mekaar leer ken deur middel van ′n briefwisseling wat binne ′n paar weke sou uitloop op die uitpraat van die mees intieme gedagtes van twee jong vriende. Kort daarna het ons persoonlik ontmoet en was dit wedersyds vir ons duidelik dat ons nie verlief sou raak op mekaar nie. Maar ons platoniese vriendskap het uitgegroei tot ′n dieper meelewing wat deur die jare gebly het. [142]
>
> [We came to know each other through our correspondence and within a few weeks it changed into the sharing of the most intimate thoughts between two young friends. Shortly after, we met in person, and it was equally obvious to both of us that we would not fall in love with each other. But our platonic friendship grew into a deeper sympathy that would remain through the years.]

Heese also told the journalist that Smit "baie vroeg begin dweep [het] met mense wat hierdie dinge vir haar kon ontsluit" [began to enthuse/gush very soon to people who could unlock these things for her]. From the tone of the letter, it appears even Heese thought Smit's budding confessions were strange. Smit's honesty and perceived enthusiasm to share personal thoughts with new friends that she had not met in person were considered, even by said friends (such as Heese in this

[142] J. Kruger: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Haar jeugvriend Kalie Heese vertel... Die geheim agter Hettie Smit se boek.". No further information available.

example), as premature and strange, yet, close friendships grew from these correspondences. The relational and reciprocal nature of letter-writing, especially in the years preceding the past two decades' technological boom making speedy communication possible, enabled Smit (and other women such as Molteno and her partners) to form intimate relationships based *firstly* on written communication.

Given that the writers of Afrikaans morality literature (like Pauw, quoted earlier) espoused the view that it was dangerous and morally corrupt for young women to write intimate letters to young men (especially platonic friends or men one did not intend to marry), it seems probable that Smit thought it imperative to change the gender of her confessor in *Sekelmaan*. Also, such intimate confessions made to a male friend would confuse 1930s readers of *Sekelmaan* because they might have thought that Maria/Marié was acting cruelly to 'Anna/Kalie' and leading 'him' on by writing about her love for another (especially since readers are not privy to the friend's responses to Maria's letters). The criticism after publication of her 'female' and sentimental confessional novel might even have been harsher if her "biegvader" [confessor] was male and not female. I do not think Smit's tension concerning writing or other misgivings about a male friend was unfounded *or* unjustified. It is, however, regrettable that the internalisation of public scrutiny and possible condemnation caused her to judge her own writing so harshly.

Gilbert and Gubar argue, for example, that a woman writer experiences "a radical fear that she cannot create, that because she can never become a 'precursor', the act of writing will isolate or destroy her" (49). The precursor in this instance refers to a female role model, to women writers who could serve as forerunners. Because there were no such precursors for Smit it thus refers to women's capacity to enter the literary conversation and gain acceptance with the patriarchal and phallocentric literary forefathers. I propose that to avoid said isolation, to avoid destruction, Smit felt the need to distinguish between her "I"s, split her subjectivity into two, and to guard against societal scrutiny and possible reproach by editing the male addressee of her intimate and confessional letters out of the published and fictionalised version of her letters. Smit's initial fear that she could not create literature worth reading because she was a *woman* entering a masculine terrain manifested throughout her writing process and probably influenced the editorial decisions to change the gender of her male confessor in real life.

The shift in literary scholarship over the past few decades to investigate autobiography and other forms of life writing as literary texts, and the consequent theorisation of the genre of autobiographical fiction from 1977 onwards, enabled me in this section to call for a re-examination of Hettie Smit's *Sekelmaan* within the framework of autobiographical fiction and life writing. I further argued that her book should be read alongside her letters written during the period in which she conceptualised, wrote and published *Sekelmaan*. Reading this text as autobiographical fiction and considering Smit's letters opens up different ways of analysing *Sekelmaan* and engaging with its author. These considerations lead to questions about existing (at times limited) critiques of her work.[143] Although the critical scholarship written in Afrikaans about *Sekelmaan* is extensive, thought-provoking and in my opinion of the highest critical and academic standard, the work is by no means exhaustive because scholars have not addressed the role of the male confessor (Kalie) in her letters or considered the text as autobiographical fiction. Once other scholars become aware that *Sekelmaan* falls in the genre of autobiographical fiction, their analyses of the text, in most cases, will have to change to accommodate new revelations about the text and its history as traced in this chapter. For example, one could suggest that Anna's portrayal (through the voice of Maria/Marié) in *Sekelmaan* is representative of the unified female subject and rational female voice in *Sekelmaan*. Knowing that the letters addressed to Anna are actually based on letters addressed to a male friend, calls such a reading into question because readers now know that these letters were first written to a man. Although the confessor becomes female in *Sekelmaan*, is it at all possible to describe 'Anna' as the rational female character in *Sekelmaan*? It is even possible to suggest that this is the very reason Smit decided to change the gender of her confessor: to construct a rational female character to counterbalance Maria/Marié. Yet, after reading the entirety of her available letters from the archives, I do not think this was the primary motivation for the gender swap, but it could have played a role in her decision-making process. Furthermore, as I have illustrated, almost all the published sections of *Sekelmaan* have an equivalent in the form of letters written by Smit, and my reading in this section has emphasised both the autobiographical and fictionalised dimensions of the text. Although I argue that by examining *Sekelmaan* as

[143] I emphasise, though I argue that *Sekelmaan* should be classified as autobiographical fiction, I *do not* suggest that it is no longer possible to read *Sekelmaan* as a confessional novel, a diary novel, an epistolary novel or as a *Dertiger prosastuk*. I simply suggest that it could also be read/analysed/classified as autobiographical fiction, that valuable insights could be gained by analysing the author's text as autobiographical fiction and that it opens avenues for future research.

autobiographical fiction readers are still afforded some insight into the author's 'real' thoughts and opinions, I illustrate in the following section that the editorial process did bring about certain changes that are only discernible if one reads the letters. I indicate that the characterisation of Maria and Marié in *Sekelmaan* are not the same as that of Hettie and Hessie found in Smit's letters. I return to the re-gendering of Anna in *Sekelmaan* towards the end of the following section.

"[E]k, wat Hessie en ek is" [I, that am [both] Hessie and I]: The body, Afrikaner Nationalism and Smit's other 'I'

My analysis of Smit's splitting of the self into the "I" (Hettie) and the "other I" (Hessie) in her letters is underpinned by Hélène Cixous's conceptualisation of all "I"s as multiple. Further supporting my discussion is the ideological interchange between society and the female body or, more specifically, between Afrikaner nationalism's essentialist definition of women's (labour) roles and the concomitant female embodiment in textual productions of women produced by Afrikaner society. In this section, I suggest (drawing on the previous section) that Afrikaner society's conscious production of the *volksmoeder* [mother of the nation] ideology caused "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar 45) for female authors. I further draw on Gilbert and Gubar's seminal work where they discuss the ways in which women tried to enter the patriarchal sphere and how they gained their own unique voices or counter-voices through writing. Lastly, I employ the concept of embodied subjectivity to gauge Smit's inner dialogue and its conversation with her physical body. I further interrogate the stylistic choices she made in her letters to explore her (uncomfortable) sense of self and then discuss the kind of subjectivity that evolved through Smit's life writing. Cixous writes:

> […] I never ask myself "who am I?" (*qui suis-je*) I ask myself: "who are I?" (*qui sont-je*) – an untranslatable phrase. Who can say who I are, how many I are, which I is the most I of my I's? Of course we each have a solid social identity, all the more solid and stable as all our other phases of identity are unstable, surprising. […] To rise above the interior chaosmos each one of us gives ourselves a spokesperson I, the social I who votes, who represents me. I have an I who teaches. I have an I who escapes me. I have an I who answers for me. I have an I who knows the law. The I who writes gives speech to all the other I's. […] Pure I, identical to I-self, does not exist. I is always in difference. I is the open set of the trances of an I by definition changing, mobile, because living-speaking-thinking-dreaming. […]. We are not "pure" I. (xvii-xviii)

Smit authored letters as the "I', Hettie, and the other "I", Hessie. My analysis suggests that it is not always clear which "I" she endows with specific characteristics, which "I" is dominant, 'speaking', or which "I" she prefers; it is precisely this intriguing stylistic technique that requires interrogation. In this section, I use the names given to the two "I"s (Hettie and Hessie) when I discuss how Smit employs each of the names or "I"s, but I refer to 'Smit' when I discuss the collective identity and physical person embodied by both "I"s. Thus, 'Smit' refers to the physical 'real' person writing the two "I"s.

When I read Smit's letters for the first time, I thought that Hessie was a 'real' person. The inchoate impression conveyed is that Hessie is a friend of Smit or maybe even her sister. Smit would casually refer to something Hessie did or said as though she was 'real', the way one would normally refer to other people in conversations. I only realised my mistake once I read that Smit authored letters as Hessie. I was also under the mistaken impression that she only started writing as Hettie and Hessie after writing *Sekelmaan* and that she was influenced by the style employed in the 'novel' to do so. After further research and analyses, I concluded that the Maria/Marié splitting of self in *Sekelmaan* is directly related to Smit's letters and the conceptualisation of two (or more) versions of self in these letters and other pseudo-letters. I return to the issue of 'more selves' or "I"s than simply Hettie and Hessie further on. As I have explained in the introduction to this chapter, Maria in *Sekelmaan* represents the ego (the intellectual, rational and cultured side of the personality) whereas Marié represents the alter ego (the emotional, natural, aesthetic and impulsive other half) (Hugo *Sekelmaan* 10-30; de Wet 9-20; Koch *Outsider* 133-134; Kannemeyer *Geskiedenis* 464). Firstly, I need to mention that there are palpable resonances, but also dissonances, between the 'fictional' characters and the two "I"s present in the letters; Maria and Hettie and also Marié and Hessie. Before continuing with a discussion about characterisation and the dualism between Hettie and Hessie in Smit's letters, I discuss Smit's engagement with both "I"s and their mutual influence on *Sekelmaan*, as well as their effect on her subjectivity. After establishing the Hettie/Hessie division of self, I present my interpretation of her two textual personalities or "I"s and its broader implications. I trace the development of the Hettie/Hessie personalities and illustrate their presence in her letters to show what each character comes to represent, and how these "I"s function in her writing.

During the early 1930s when Smit was writing *Sekelmaan*, she told Louw in a letter: "Ek skryf ′n roman. Die naam? 'Ek en Hessie'. O ja, Hessie het tog nou die dag vir jou ′n briefie[144] geskrywe. Dis so klein dat ek dit aanstuur"[145] [I am writing a novel. The name? 'Hessie and I'. Oh yes, Hessie wrote you a [small] letter the other day. It's so small that I am sending it on]. At a later stage she also wrote: "Dit mag vir jou snaaks klink om dit van my te hoor – ek, wat Hessie en ek is – maar ek verseker jou dat dit waar is"[146] [It might sound strange to you to hear this from me – I, that am [both] Hessie and I – but I assure you that it is true]. From these two excerpts it becomes clear that Smit wrote as two "I"s, Hettie and Hessie, and that she considered them as two separate but related parts of the self. Hettie was, as Smit called it, the "ek" ["I"], or what one could term the primary self, or dominant "I", seeing she was called Hettie and published under that name. Hessie then was the moniker, the "I" Smit used for a separate or other part of the self, a self that existed in the interiority of the mind *and* body, and not the self presented to the public or used as referential pronoun in public. Yet, a confusing discord already arises with this assertion, since in one of the letters I quoted in the previous section, Hettie said that Hessie (*not* Hettie or the primary "I") was popular in the 'real' world and thrived in society and that she did not "fit into 'the world and life'". Hettie described Hessie as the one who would marry the fat farmer and make coffee; Hessie conformed to the gendered notion that women should marry and keep house. As I illustrate throughout this section, Smit's demarcation and employment of the two "I"s merge. Irregularities appear in her use of the two "I"s and how she characterises them and readers are unsure what each "I" in most instances constitutes or represents. What is of further importance is that Hessie, and not just Hettie, authored letters.

In a letter dated 10 January 1932, Smit wrote to Louw:

> Ikey[147] jou lelikste ou Spinnekop,

[144] As mentioned before, the suffix 'kie', 'tjie' or 'ie' in Afrikaans is usually added onto a noun to indicate a diminutive or to make a noun a diminutive. In the above extract "briefie" thus does not necessarily mean that the letter is small or tiny, but signals Smit's insecurities about the written letter. The diminutive 'ie' is used expressively in Afrikaans in numerous ways by different speakers and it requires familiarity with the language to distinguish between the nuances and intentional use of the diminutive 'ie'. In this specific case, Smit is trying to convey that the letter is 'unimportant' or trivial and it also indicates her discomfort when discussing it.

[145] H. Smit: SULISMS, W.E.G. Louw collection 158, Dn. 158.K.S.40 (3). 4 February 1932. p. 5.

[146] H. Smit: SULISMS, W.E.G. Louw collection 158, Dn. 158.K.S.40 (5). August 1932. p. 2.

[147] Smit gave Louw playful nicknames in most of the letters in this collection.

> Glo my ek wou lankal vir jou ′n regtige brief skryf, maar dink jy Hessie wou dit toelaat? Sy steek vir my die skryfpapier weg as ek daarna soek; en as ek haar voorkry dan sê sy: jy sit met jou voete op ′n tortelduifie en jy luister na die water. Wat dit met die saak te doen het weet Hessie alleen. Ag man die vroumens bederf my hele vakansie. Ek wens maar ek kan liewer vir haar in pleks van die M.A. by Bellville afgegooi het. Maar ek weet Hessie verveel jou net soos vir my, en ek het kruiwa vragte vol nuus en klagtes en skinderpraatjies, en dinge waarvoor jy jou lippe kan aflek... [...] Hessie sê dis – nee wag ek sal nie van die arme ou siel skinder agter haar rug nie. [...] Die arme Hessie. Lees jy nog Ikey? Dis darem baie snaaks om werklik ′n regtige brief aan ′n regtige mens – Mens te skrywe. (Hessie sê dit jok ek voor die voet). [...] Ek sien Joan het ′n dogtertjie. Hessie sê: 'Foeitog, sy sal nog eendag so baie baie liefhê.' Dink![148]
>
> [Ikey you ugly old Spider,
>
> Believe me, I've wanted to write you a real letter for a long time now, but do you think Hessie wanted to allow this? She hides the writing paper from me if I search for it; and if I interrogate her she says: you are sitting with your feet on a turtle-dove listening to the water. What this has to do with the case at hand only Hessie knows. Oh man the woman is ruining my entire holiday. I wish I could rather have dropped her off in Bellville instead of the M.A. But I know Hessie bores you the same as she bores me, and I have wheelbarrow loads full of news and complaints and gossip, and things you can smack your lips at … […] Hessie says – no wait, I won't gossip about the poor soul behind her back. […] The poor Hessie. Are you still reading [this] Ikey? It is really very strange to write a real letter to a real person – Person. (Hessie says I am lying through my teeth). […] I see Joan has a [little] daughter. Hessie says: 'Shame, she will someday love so so much.' Think!

This is the earliest dated letter (that I have to date located in the archives) in which Smit wrote about both Hettie and Hessie. In this instance one already notices the strife and tension between the two selves or "I"s. Hessie did not want Hettie to write to Louw and hid the writing paper; she also "ruin[ed]" Hettie's holiday. In this case then, Hessie was the 'stronger' one who did not want Hettie to write to Louw and combatted the urge to contact the object of affection. Towards the end of the letter, Hettie noted that Hessie stated that she pitied the girl-child who was born recently because she would someday love someone to the point of distraction. It is also possible that Smit already wrote pseudo-letters to Louw at this stage and that Hessie simply refused to write "real" letters to a "real person" because she preferred the pseudo-letters. What does become clear in this earliest example of Hessie's manifestation (I expand on this point when analysing the letters to Gerryts), is that readers can see that Hessie is not merely the lovesick 'natural' manifestation (in

[148] H. Smit: SULISMS, W.E.G. Louw collection 158, Dn. 158.K.S.40 (5). 10 January 1932. pp. 1-8.

relation to Marié) of Hettie, but also level-headed, rational, strong-willed and proud (like Maria in *Sekelmaan*). I read Hessie's refusal to allow Hettie to write to Louw (who has already rejected Smit) as a defiant act to protect the self from further emotional harm because, as discussed earlier, Smit was already insecure and sensitive about male rejection.[149] For example, in other correspondence Louw sometimes wrote Smit letters that she did not find satisfactory because they lacked, according to her, intimacy, congeniality or warmth. Hettie then experienced suffering and accordingly responded scathingly, exhibiting self-pity that she expressed in a rather orotund fashion (February 1932[150]; August 1932[151]). If, however, Hessie in this case objected to Hettie writing a "real" letter and not a "pseudo-letter" to Louw, my reading of Hessie in this instance as Hettie's protector still holds, since Hessie objected and actively tried to prevent Hettie from *posting* letters to Louw that could hurt Hettie. Thus, Hessie is portrayed in this extract as the protector, as whimsical and obstinate, but also as sentimental and overly concerned with the topic of love. This particular characterisation of Hessie changed in other letters and in correspondence with other friends. Hettie, in this extract, acted as the voice of Smit (for both Hettie and Hessie). It appears to a certain degree as though Hettie vicariously voiced certain things she did not feel comfortable to say as herself or her-"I" through the personality of Hessie, using her as a mouthpiece for what was considered unutterable.

In some instances, Hettie projected her own uncertainties and insecurities onto Hessie, I suggest, to shift the blame of her own perceived mistakes or character faults onto another "I". Hettie wrote the following to Gerryts:

> Hoe verskriklik is die droogte nie – Maar ek kan nog maar net beteuterde liefdes- of haatbriefies skrywe, en die ganse volksly ding verbyloop. En tog weet ek koppig

[149] Hessie's protection of Hettie is also visible when she resisted in a similar vein when Hettie wrote to Gerryts: "Ek verlang definitief vanaand na jou, en ek gaan ′n outydse nuusbriefie met hoe-gaan-dit-nog, en baie-groete, en reën-hier-by-ons, skrywe. Maar ek sal hom nog baie lank laat lê voor ek hom pos, want ek wil jou wys dat ek ook net so lank kan stilbly soos jy... (Hessie sê ek behoort minstens twee maande te wag, maar só spaaiterig is ek nou nie)". [I definitely miss you tonight, and I am going to write a typical newsletter including a how-are-you, a kind-regards, and it-is-raining-here. But I will have to let him lie before posting it, because I want to show you that I can remain silent for as long as you ... (Hessie says I should wait for at least two months, but I'm not that spiteful)]. (H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. ± 28 December 1933. p. 1.)

[150] H. Smit: SULISMS, W.E.G. Louw collection 158, Dn. 158.K.S.40 (4). February 1932. pp. 1-5.

[151] H. Smit: SULISMS, W.E.G. Louw collection 158, Dn. 158.K.S.40 (5). August 1932. pp. 1-6.

> en amper trots in die stilte: dat elke vrou se liefdelewe vir háár belangriker is as die droogte, al sou sy dit wegsteek. [...]
>
> Jong, en daardie laaste briefie van my moet jy maar mee pyp opsteek en oor glimlag. Hessie was glo weer 'in ′n stemming' die arme ding, en wat sy dan alles op papier afsanik is ek regtig nie meer verantwoordelik voor nie. Jy weet tog self hoe ewewigtig en ryp ek is![152]
>
> [How terrible is this drought – But I can only write pathetic love or hate letters, and bypass the entire plight of the nation. And yet I obstinately and almost proudly know in the silence: that every woman's love life is more important to her than the drought, even if she should hide it. […]
>
> *Jong*, and that last letter of mine you must use to light your pipe and then smile about it. Hessie was apparently 'in one of her moods again', and I am really not responsible any more for all that she bemoans on paper. You are aware of how balanced and mature I am!]

Hettie was satirising herself by saying that she was "balanced and mature", taking into account the various other instances in letters where she called herself and her writing "immature". Her assumption that love trumps worries about national disasters for *all* women was a gross generalisation and a misrepresentation of women. Interestingly, in this particular instance it is not Hessie who was overly concerned with the topic of "love" that enabled her to "bypass the entire plight of the nation", but Hettie herself. Her "I"s seem to be contradictory here: Hettie stated that she wrote "pathetic love [and] hate letters" and then blamed Hessie's "mood" for a previous letter that she wrote and later considered as a regretful "moan[ing]". The following extract is from the letter written to Gerryts by Hessie that Hettie referred to, in the above extract, as Hessie's whining:

> Windekind
>
> Daardie brief van jou het ek ook deurgelees en ek weet nou dat die sekelmaan nie gejok het nie, jy is regtig baie hartseer oor iets. [...] Waarom lewe ons? Waarom is daar pyn? Koddige vrae het jy in jou siekte! Hoor hoe drup die reën op die blare daarbuite, hoor hoe wapper sy fraaiings verweg op die wind! Miskien sal die antwoord jou more weer byval; maar nou moet jy slaap, moeë kind... Want die reën sing saggies sy lied op die dakke; en die boomtoppe wieg heen-en-weer in die wind...
>
> Oumoeder Hessie[153]

[152] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. October 1933. pp. 5 & 7. The original Afrikaans is poetic and lost in the translation to English. The tone is whimsically sentimental and the style lyrically self-reflexive.
[153] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. October 1933. pp. 1-2.

> [Child of the Winds
>
> I also read that letter of yours and now I know that the sickle moon did not lie, you are truly heartbroken about something. […] Why do we live? Why is there pain? Peculiar questions you have in your illness! Listen to the pitter-patter of the rain on the leaves outside, listen to the flutter of his fraying's far away on the wind! Maybe then the answer will come to you tomorrow; but now you have to sleep, weary child… Because the rain is softly singing his song on the roofs; and the treetops are rocking back and forth in the wind…
>
> Old mother Hessie]

This letter was signed by "Oumoeder Hessie" [Old mother Hessie]. The tone or turn of phrase is idiomatic, poetic, sentimental and very intimate. It is significant that this letter was written after minimal correspondence between them and a few months after they met in person for the first time. As mentioned earlier with reference to her relationship with Heese, it appears that it was a character trait of Smit to form intimate relationships with people through the medium of letters. Hettie referred to this letter written to Gerryts as Hessie's "moan[ing]" and told Gerryts to consider the letter as fodder, but if compared to the rest of Smit's letters authored as "Hettie" (those that I have been able to find), the style is similar throughout (with slight variations here and there). What is important though is that Hettie 'blamed' Hessie for any writing that she regarded as too sentimental (considered as a 'female' mode of expression) or dramatic. A paradox in the Hettie-Hessie characterisation becomes clear: Hessie in a previous extract tried to curb Hettie's lovelorn sentimentality and yet, in this instance, Hettie blamed Hessie for her romantic and sentimental writing. Hessie, from what I can discern, is almost indistinguishable from Hettie and fulfils different functions that I will discuss throughout this section.

In other letters to Gerryts, Hettie blamed her obsession with Louw on Hessie. Nonetheless, she tried to explain and defend Hessie's sentimentality, possibly because it represented part of Smit. Hettie wrote:

> In ′n mens se wesenlikste oomblikke is jy tog tot ′n mate 'sentimenteel' nou nie? En dat is veel. Want jy weet ou Hessie kannie water drink of sy moet weet wat hý daarmee te doen het. Dat so ′n dwaasheid goedsmoed op ′n mens kan gelê word om jou lewe lank te dra... Is dit nie dom nie?[154]

[154] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 2 November 1934. pp. 1-2.

> [Isn't it so that, in one's most essential moments, one is to a certain extent 'sentimental'? And that is a lot. Because you know that Hessie can't drink water if she does not know what he has to do with it. That such a preposterousness can be given to you to shoulder for the rest of your life … Is it not stupid?

This projection of expressions of lovesickness onto Hessie changed as time passed. It is possible though that Smit simply could not maintain the division of "I's" amidst her emotional turmoil. The "I" and other "I" merged in many instances in Smit's letters. Hettie later admitted to Gerryts:

> Hierdie brief aan Gladstone, dié onmisbare daaglikse dialoog met hom by *alles* wat *ek* ervaar, is ′n brief en ′n dialoog met álle mense wat so voel.[155] (my klemplasing)
>
> [This letter addressed to Gladstone, this indispensable daily dialogue with him about *everything I* experience, is a letter and dialogue with all people experiencing the same thing.] (my emphasis)

What emerges from these two excerpts is that Hettie and Hessie *both* loved Louw and pined for him (as was the case with Maria and Marié in *Sekelmaan*). Here, Hettie's "I" admitted that *she* was in love with Gladstone and that her daily inner dialogue with him was "indispensable" and encompassed "everything" she experienced. In the previous extract Hettie said that it was Hessie who could not even "drink water" without wondering "what he ha[d] to do with it". At this point one cannot help but wonder if Hessie was just a convenient tool to use to shift the blame onto another "I" for feelings Hettie did not want to claim ownership of. Initially, it seems, Hettie did not want to admit to feelings of utter desolation, heartbreak and the ensuing sentimental writing. To my mind, she attributed these obsessions and perceived 'female' weaknesses to Hessie. Yet, as readers have seen in other extracts, Hessie was not only sentimental and irrational, she sometimes represented Smit's moral and rational centre and tried to protect Hettie against herself. The stark division then between Maria and Marié in *Sekelmaan* is nowhere to be found in Smit's letters where she also employed two "I"s. I suggest that particular character traits were consciously edited into the autobiographical fiction.[156] At this stage of the analysis of Hettie and Hessie one cannot

[155] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 2 December 1937. p. 2.
[156] Indeed, one has to wonder how much of *Sekelmaan*'s editorial changes were actually Smit's decision. One of the editors, N.P. van Wyk Louw, wrote to his brother, W.E.G. Louw, and told him that many parts of the manuscript were not "mooi" [pretty] but that Smit was "dadelik gereed om veranderings te maak waar nodig" [readily willing to make changes where necessary] (Kannemeyer *Dokumente* 45).

help but conclude that Hessie served as a scapegoat for writings penned by Smit and emotions experienced by Hettie from which she desired to distance herself.

Kannemeyer states in *Geskiedenis van Afrikaanse Literatuur* 1 [History of Afrikaans Literature I] (1984) that Smit's Master's thesis in Education, "Belangrike aspekte van die jeugdige sielelewe...uit die dagboek van ′n Afrikaanse meisie*"* [Important aspects of the youthful spiritual life … from the diary of an Afrikaans girl] (1932), was based on her youth diary, the predecessor of *Sekelmaan* (463). Smit, however, never admitted that the diary she analysed in her thesis was her own. Indeed, she tried to convey the opposite impression in the introduction of her thesis by stating that she "came across such a complete diary and some letters and other writings (written from 1924-1930) of such an Afrikaans girl" (my translation, 3).[157] Yet, Smit utilised as the primary source for her MA thesis her own youth diaries to analyse the development of child and youth psychology (15-19 years of age), and the ways in which teachers should respond to students in certain phases of their development.[158] In the dissertation, she discussed the following extract to illustrate that a young girl might create a fictional friend in her mind to relieve loneliness and to gain a confidante. As the extract indicates, this was probably the first conceptualisation of what was to become 'Hessie'. According to Hugo, Smit was 16 years and 10 months old when she penned the following and, at that stage, preferred writing in English ("Hettie Smit" 46). Her so-called English phase was inspired by an excellent and passionate English teacher (Hugo "Hettie Smit" 47):

> I have often thought of a person who could understand me – a person who could nod in satisfaction when thinking of me, my thoughts, my deeds, my ways; one to whom I could confide all my few secrets, all my wild whims and fancies, and, in all, one who could understand my whole intricate conception of life. I have not yet come across my friend, and I never will, for a thing of romance is an impossibility nowadays, and now, in the intensity of an overwhelming longing for that friend, I have struck on the happy and mad idea of inventing you!

[157] I have been unable to locate Smit's youth diaries that Kannemeyer alludes to and that, according to Daniel Hugo, do exist. The now deceased curator of NALN, Otto Liebenberg, was in the process of making enquiries for me about these youth diaries, but he too was unable to locate them in any South African archive. These diaries were kept at the RGN, but when the collection was moved to NALN the youth diaries were not included. I regret the loss of these important literary archival documents.

[158] For further discussion about Smit's youth diaries and their relation to *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan*, see Afrikaans poet and academic Daniel Hugo's insightful article, "Hettie Smit se B.Ed.-verhandeling as aanleiding vir *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan*" [Hettie Smit's B.Ed. dissertation as precursor to She Comes with the Sickle Moon] (1987).

Of course you are just imaginary and do not exist in a solid form of reality; yet I like to think of you as a splendid real piece of humanity, extraordinary human, strangely sympathetic with your beautiful big blue eyes, your curly yellow locks, your whole fine, firm being.

And now I am going to equip your personage with all the necessary qualities and characteristics, for my biggest pal and friend. In the first place you shall be shockingly exceptional and peculiar in all your thinking, acting and judging.

On no account whatsoever am I going to allow you to be ordinary or common. You must differ from others - especially from the average class of commons who laugh at everything uncommon.

You shall be romantic beyond conception, and the swaying glittering lamp of Romance and Fancy shall lead you through innumerable adventures and exciting incidents. You shall love Mystery, the dusky bride of Romance, and you shall accordingly act mysteriously and strangely doing deeds of which you yourself do not know the meaning ... Lastly you shall be extremely musical, for this includes all the rest of the beautiful qualities necessary for you. Your eyes and ears will be open to the beauty and music of nature. You shall love the beauty of a sweet smoothly flowing melody in the carolling of a bird, or in the song of a rippling streamlet; the grand roar and thunder of the music in a storm on land or ocean, or the sad mournful tunes the wind plays on a tree-harp. Your whole great grand motto in life shall be: “Is it beautiful?”

I think this is enough about your character and nature, and besides you know what I want you to be, and you are going to act up to it.

In this book I am going to converse with you as an intimate friend, and of course you are going to agree with me on everything and all I say – and I’m going to say all I know all I wonder why, and all that has struck me during my dull monotonous past, my naughty present, and all that will strike me in future.

I forgot all about giving you a proper name – I can’t always keep on calling you “imaginary friend” for I might perhaps say “menagery friend” sometimes, and you won’t like it of course. I think I shall call you Ione – simply because I like the sound of the word.

I have lived in loneliness on my Isle of Desolation all my life so far, I enjoyed it to a certain extent, but now the loneliness has suddenly become unbearable – now that I have realised that I need, and have needed all the time, a mirror for my thoughts and deeds and ways. You have come now, at a critical time, and my loneliness is broken. You have beached your little canoe on the shore and now I can hear you trudging towards my habitation closely nestling in the midst of the surrounding palms, whose long groping arms lovingly caress the roof of my hut. Is it but the faraway surge and roar of the breakers on the beach I hear again? No, I am quite certain that I hear the sound of human footsteps – even if it is only a dim thud-thud-thud coming nearer slowly but surely ... and yet I wonder. Oh! Ion[e], do come

> quickly, break this magic spell, and by showing yourself let me scorn disappointment and those faraway mocking waves ...
>
> Yours lovingly,
>
> Madcap Andy.[159]

According to Smit, she "[invented]" her "imaginary friend" to have someone to confide in, to combat loneliness and "[d]esolation", to agree with her and *know* her. Acknowledging that the friend has no corporeal existence, she states that she will still be a "splendid real piece of humanity, extraordinary human" and continues to imbue this figment with human physicality and adorns her with golden locks and blue eyes. The figment is required to be "uncommon" in all. The personality is then given three interesting characteristics: a romantic nature, a love of the mysterious, and a deep admiration for all that is beautiful. Ione, presumably named after the Greek sea nymph Ione, one of the Nereid, appears to be an idealised version of Smit herself. Ione was created to be Smit's imaginary friend she could write to in her diary and shared many interests and character traits with her creator. She too had to be musical, romantic, fanciful, mysterious, whimsical and uncommon to "mirror" her creator's interests and to become a useful sounding board. Clearly, Smit was artistic and practised various intriguing life writing techniques as a young girl. It appears that Smit preferred to practice forms of life writing with an audience in mind. She created an imaginary friend to write to in her diary, her pseudo-letters (which were a kind of diary too) were written to Louw, and finally, she seems to have written self-reflexive, self-exploratory letters to her friends Gerryts, Alberts and Heese. The life writing forms chosen by Smit indicate that she relationally made sense of her thoughts/feelings.

I deduce from the above extract that Smit continued to write to "Ione", the imaginary friend, and that these two distinct personalities, the one textual and the other a social corporeal being, began to blend. Smit wrote: "you know what I want you to be, and you are going to act up to it". However, as readers already know, this instruction of the creator was not followed by the textual creation and was thus undermined by "Ione" and by "Hessie". I return to this point again. As discussed above, at certain stages later in Smit's life, her 'creation' Hessie intermittently became the dominant "I". In a letter written to Gerryts, Smit wrote: "Ek haat vir Hessie ook, wat op papier in

[159] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213, *Belangrike aspekte van die jeugdige sielelewe...uit die dagboek van 'n Afrikaanse meisie* [Important aspects of the youthful … from the diary of an Afrikaans girl] (1932). pp. 81-85. "Madcap Andy" is a nickname Smit gave herself (Hugo "Hettie Smit" 46).

Kammabriewe skimme liefhet in pleks van lewendige normale mense in die helder sonlig"[160] [I also hate Hessie, who loves spectres on the paper of pseudo-letters instead of living normal people in the bright sunshine]. The antagonism and hatred Hettie later experienced towards Hessie is diametrically opposed to the imaginary "best pal" she intended to create in her youth. Important to highlight from the above section before continuing my analysis is that Smit described her imaginary other "I" as a figment with no actual body and hence to a certain extent as disembodied.

Apart from Andries Alberts (1990), no one has written about the interchange and intersection between Hettie and Hessie in Smit's letters. However, Alberts does not extend his enquiry to the implications this occurrence has for reading *Sekelmaan* as autobiographical fiction instead of fiction. Although I draw on his analysis, I disagree with his premises and extrapolations of the reasons Smit wrote as two "I"s.

Alberts includes a chapter in his book *In Vreemdelingskap* [In a state of foreignness] (1990) in which he reflects on his literary friendship with Smit. They corresponded during the 1930-40s and met in person on several occasions (160-163). The chapter contains very interesting letters exchanged between them, using the personas of Adamastus and Atlantina (the ancient man and woman), which they intended to publish later as a book with the theme, *Adam en Eva in die Afrikaanse Paradys* [Adam and Eve in the Afrikaans Paradise] (162). Unfortunately, they never completed the book because, according to Alberts, Smit feared that such a book might encumber her chances of getting married; apparently marriage was "lewensbelangrik" [of vital importance] to her (163).

Alberts reflects on Smit's use of Hettie and Hessie in the letters she wrote to him and argues that Hettie and Hessie were both pseudo-personalities of the unified "I", Hester, a prototypical *Boeredogter* [Boer girl], honest, and noble in spirit. He thought the splitting of the self was caused by Smit's inner turmoil, namely her intense admiration of beauty, art and the written word, fuelled by her desire to gain the social status that marriage and children would provide. He further opines that the tension was aggravated by the fact that Smit thought she was unattractive and that she was embarrassed by her raspy voice that sounded like that of a "gans" [goose] (161-163). Alberts emphasises that it would be inaccurate to think that Smit suffered from a kind of personality

[160] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 4 July 1934. p. 5.

disorder, because her writing reveals that the creation of Hettie and Hessie was a "kunsmatige dramatiese voorstelling" [fictitious dramatic representation] (162).

I both agree and disagree with Alberts' reading of Hettie and Hessie. His interpretation of Smit as Hester, the prototypical *Boeredogter*, reveals his investment in the subliminal nationalist discourse responsible for creating certain ideals of womanhood, and I vehemently oppose this reading. Smit *never* used the name Hester (as the letters Alberts include ironically indicate) in any of the letters available in the archive and Alberts' creation of 'Hester', the honourable and noble *Boeredogter*, reveals more about his interpellation as subject into Afrikaner nationalism's gendered nature than it illustrates about Smit. I do agree though with the reasons provided by Alberts for Smit's splitting of self. Alberts foregrounds in his analysis the centrality of the body and physicality concerning Smit's anxieties.

Hettie Smit was an embodied subject. As argued in the previous section, her awareness of her womanhood and its social meaning as conceptualised by Afrikaner nationalism hampered her ability to write. Womanhood as socially constructed by Afrikaner nationalism in the form of the *volksmoeder* also prescribed the ambits of Smit's role as 'woman' and was based on her biological sex; thus, her body. Smit's preoccupation with her physical appearance permeated the letters written to Gerryts and Heese. Smit was introduced to Gerryts by Heese. Heese shared letters with Gerryts that Smit wrote to him, and Gerryts decided to pursue a literary friendship with Smit because he was impressed by her poetic and sensitive nature stylistically expressed.[161] Before the first meeting in person was to take place between Gerryts and Smit, she wrote: "ek sou ook nie omgee as ek jou bakkies kon sien sonder om myne te wys nie. Ons moet maar ′n skerm tussenin sit" [I also would not mind if I could see your mug without showing mine. We will have to put up a screen between us].[162] Later, she wrote to Gerryts: "ek gee nie eers meer baie om dat ek nie mooi is nie" [I no longer care that much that I am not beautiful].[163] She clearly believed she was not physically attractive. On the 30th of October 1935, she wrote to Gerryts:

> En toe het ek en Hessie die Sekelmaan klaar geskryf, en getik en môre stuur ek dit weg. Ag en weet jy Windekind, dis nie my eie ou verdrietjie daardie nie. Ek vóél

[161] K. Heese: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/32. 10 February 1933. p. 1.
[162] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 21 May 1933. p. 10.
[163] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 4 July 1934. p. 2.

> dis al ons armsalige lelike vroumense s'n wat by die Agterdeur staan – wat in die lewe ingedwing is en nie ′n bruilofkleed aan het nie.[164]
>
> [And then me and Hessie finished writing the Sicklemoon, and typed [it] and tomorrow I am sending it away. Oh, you know Child of the Winds, it is not [only] my own sorrow [I wrote]. I feel it belongs to all of us, the pitiable ugly women standing at the Backdoor – forcefully shoved into life without a marriage cloak.

Smit's physical appearance, or her belief that she lacked beauty, determined much of her writing by causing trauma. It seems Smit thought that her lack of beauty impeded her chances of forming meaningful romantic relationships and thus affected her worth as a woman, and by extension as a person. To gain entry to cultural (male) terrains and move away from nature (female), women were historically (and even contemporarily) expected to be attractive or at least attempt to attain beauty through modification: "To guarantee our man-made place in culture, we are still exhorted to 'become' women through increasingly complex regulatory practices of ornamentation such as weight control, skin and hair care, attention to fashion, and, above all, resistance to aging" (Conboy, Medina and Stanbury 3). I propose that Smit's belief that she was in some way 'lacking' in expected qualities, such as corporeal beauty, increased her feelings of inadequacy. Susan Bordo explains: "Through these disciplines, we continue to memorize on our bodies the feel and conviction of lack, or insufficiency, of never being good enough" (91). As the above extract from Smit's letter indicates, to a certain extent she dedicated her book to other women who were also "ugly", because it is a "pitiable" state for a woman to suffer from. Her language conveys a sense of the hopelessness experienced by women who are regarded not beautiful; she stated that they must stand at the "[b]ackdoor" of life, that they were "forcefully shoved" into life without a "marriage cloak". The marriage cloak in a literal sense means their ability to find a partner and love, but on a figurative level indicates that there is no 'feast' or 'celebration' in life for unattractive women. "Bruilof" in Afrikaans suggests both the mentioned readings of a marriage cloak. Furthermore, in Smit's letter to her "imaginary friend" she described the friend as a person with "beautiful big blue eyes, [with] curly yellow locks, [with a] whole fine, firm being". The fact that her imagining is not limited to a spiritually beautiful other "I", but also evokes an other "I" who is physically beautiful, might indicate her subliminal desire to be beautiful. From Smit's writing, one can therefore deduce that she thought beauty was a prerequisite for women in her society, internalised this requirement and felt that she was 'lacking'. My reading is therefore that her

[164] H. Smit: SULISMS, HS collection 213. 30 October 1935. p. 2.

imagined lack of physical appeal caused self-doubt, so that she created and named a beautiful other "I", who in turn resisted the limits and boundaries placed on her (created) "I". "Ione", and later "Hessie", seemingly asserted their "I's" and did not necessarily do Hettie's bidding. As readers have seen, both "I"s became spokespersons for Smit's subjectivity and encapsulated different aspects of her being. She indeed became a "gesplete wese" [bifurcated being], and experienced herself as "die helfte iemand anders" [one half [of] someone else], as she wrote to Heese.[165]

As mentioned in the introduction, Elizabeth Grosz writes while reflecting on the body and its centrality to subjectivity: "If bodies are objects or things, they are like no others, for they are the centres of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency" (xi). Although Hettie initially created, as she described it, an incorporeal "figment" of the imagination to become her confidante or her first confessor, this "figment" *was* also *embodied* in Smit's imagination, regardless of her claim that the figment was incorporeal and, as readers have seen, this figment became one of "the centres of [her] perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency", central to the formation of her subjectivity. Smit's acrimonious relationship with her body adversely affected her confidence and ability to write. It appears Smit believed that the perceived "lack" of her body made her "less" of a woman; this supposed 'lacking' womanhood further aggravated feelings of inadequacy in her writing that she considered as sub-par to masculine standards.

Smit originally wrote a final chapter to *Sekelmaan* which the editors vetoed. Considering *Sekelmaan* as autobiographical fiction, the chapter also reveals, to a certain degree, aspects of Smit's thoughts and feelings. Smit gave Amanda Botha the authority in 1972 to publish the final chapter she wrote for *Sekelmaan* upon the death of Smit, Louw and their respective spouses. Extracts from this final chapter shed light on Smit's perception of her own beauty and its shortcomings:

> Vir Johan se bruid. Ek het maar net gehoor van jou wat hy liefhet, en jy is vir my vaag-mooi soos ′n pêrel, soos ′n feë prinses met ′n wit sluier uit ′n goue koets. In my drome snags het jy deftige name met groot goue krulletters: Amelia van Deventer of Wilhelmina Josephina Malherbe. Ag, jy moet regtig mooi wees hoor om by my liefste te pas as jy langs hom sit by die vername mense. [...]

[165] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 11/56. November 1933. p. 6.

Syerig moet jou hare wees, en blink soos goue spinnedrade in die son, met baie meer krulle daarin as myne. Jou neus moet mooi wees hoor – baie reguiter as myne, want my liefste is baie vernaam, en hoe sal jy anders by hom pas. [...][166]

[For Johan's bride. I have only heard about you whom he loves, and to me you are hazy-beautiful like a pearl, like a fairy princess with a white veil coming out of a golden chariot. In my dreams at night you have stately names [written] with big gold calligraphy: Amelia van Deventer or Wilhelmina Josephine Malherbe. Oh, you have to be really beautiful to suit my beloved when you sit next to him with [the] other important people. [...]

Satin-like your hair has to be, and shining like gold spiderwebs in the sun, with more curls in them than mine. Your nose has to be pretty you know – more straight than mine, becauce my love is very important, and how else will you fit with him. [...]]

Figure 14 Photograph of Hettie Smit as young woman

[166] A. Botha: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Liefdesgeskrifte", *Rooi Rose*, Dn. 261/2003. February 2003. pp. 30-32.

Maria writes in the unpublished final chapter of *Sekelmaan* that Johan's bride (who I presume was Rosa Nepgen, the woman Louw eventually wed) had to be beautiful to "fit with him" and the other "important people" around him. She referred to her lacklustre curls and supposed snub nose that would not suit Johan because she was not "beautiful" enough (see figures 7 and 14). Coupled with the frequent references Hettie herself made to her apparent unattractiveness and the similarities between Maria and Hettie discussed above (the letters and the autofiction as well) it is possible to surmise that Hettie thought she was not beautiful or elegant enough for Louw to love her.

By way of concluding the two interpretive sections of this chapter, I discuss an extract from a letter Smit wrote to Alberts. The extract, to my mind, encapsulates elements of all arguments raised in this chapter:

> By Hessie word twee mense mos vier want sy trap twee rye spore deur die lewe, soos een wat dronk is van skoon fonteinwater. Jy Legio, Latyn vir Leërmag, jy Adamastor, Portugees vir oerkrag, maak van twee mense ′n feesvierende menigte. […]
>
> Ek begin so voel soos die snaakse mooi vrouens wat bemin word. Net die spieël red my van hulle vlakheid. Wat se anti-klimaks kan so ′n stuk glas wees! Tina gooi partymaal die handdoek oor sy boonste helfte; dan sien sy in die onderste gedeelte net haar bene waarvan jy gesê het dat hulle mooi is. Wê!
>
> Jy het my laat vergeet wat gedurig soos warm kole in my hart gebrand het: dat ek nie mooi is nie. […]
>
> Ek wil huil omdat ek ′n arme, afhanklike juffroutjie is. Onverbiddellik is ek aan die menslike noodlot vasgeanker. Magteloos is my afkeer van die goedige mevroutjie-lewe van veilige eet en drink en ′n gesellige koppietjie tee by my modieuse buurvrou. Teen my weersin in soek ek die veiligheid van ′n huis en ′n getroude bestaan.
>
> Ek wil stil in ′n huis woon en koffieskink vir my man. Dan eers sal ek die mensdom vierkant in die oë kan kyk. As ek maar uit hierdie noodlotsdwang kon uitklim en weer dronk word van jou roekelose vaart deur die lewe … van jou pragtige vuurstreep, Verskietende Ster!
>
> (Smit qtd. in Alberts 166 & 171)
>
> [With Hessie two people necessarily become four because she walks two rows of footsteps through life, like one drunk from clear fountain water. You Legio, Latin for military, you Adamastor, Portuguese for ancient power, make of two people a celebrating crowd. […]

> I'm beginning to feel like the strange beautiful women who are loved. Only the mirror saves me from their vanity. What an anti-climax such a piece of glass can be! Tina sometimes covers the top half with a towel; and then she only sees in the bottom part her legs of which you said they are pretty. *Wê!*
>
> You made me forget that which frequently burned in my heart like warm coals: that I am not beautiful. […]
>
> I want to cry because I am a pitiable, dependent missy. Inescapably I am anchored to human fate. Powerless is my aversion of the kindly missus-life of safely eating and drinking a sociable cup of tea at my fashionable female neighbour's [house]. Despite my loathing do I seek the safety of a house and a married existence.
>
> I want to live quietly in a house and pour coffee for my husband. Only then would I be able to face humanity. If I could climb out of this duress of fate and again become intoxicated by your reckless flight through life … by your beautiful tail of fire, Shooting Star!]

I have noted earlier in this chapter that Smit wrote as multiple "I"s. The above extract demonstrates that she easily slipped between different personas. In these letters to Alberts she was writing as the persona Atlantina, and yet, she referred to Atlantina or "Tina" in the third person as she did with Hessie in other letters. She also referred to Hessie in these letters she authored as the persona Atlantina in a similar manner as other letters discussed earlier signed by Hettie. Smit therefore not only had one other "I" in the guise of Hessie: it appears she created more personas, such as Atlantina and Ione. Cixous' assertion that all "I"s are multiple seems applicable here. However, Smit named some of her "I"s. My reading of Smit's collection of letters written as Atlantina to Alberts (or Adamastor) suggest that they are simply typical letters she would write to any of her friends. For example, she talks about her pupils and her life as a teacher in Prince Albert as she would in other letters. I can discern no difference between the letters she wrote as Hettie/Hessie to friends and those she wrote to Alberts and signed as Tina or Lantie (nicknames she gave Atlantina). Furthermore, she frequently slipped and referred to Hessie in these letters, as though she was writing as Hettie, which I think was the case. Atlantina simply became another name or mask to Smit. These creative fictive personas attest to a writer with a lively imagination who in text could effortlessly embrace different personalities. It is even possible to say that she utilised different "I"s to voice aspects of her subjectivity by imbuing personas with her diverging desires, thoughts and feelings.

The extract also discloses the tension Smit experienced within her society. Her subjectivity was formed in accordance with and in opposition to gendered ideals of women, such as the *volksmoeder* ideology, which located women within the domestic sphere and the 'safety' of marriage. What is fascinating about the above extract is Smit's keen observation of her own subjectivity and how it formed. She stated that she could only "face" the world once she was safely ensconced in marriage and in the home, but she called this mind-set "pitiable", something she "loath[ed]", had an "aversion" to and to which she submitted under "duress". It is further described as her "fate", something she could not escape in her society. It follows that Smit was aware that her desire to become a wife and stay at home was partly cultivated by her society, but still she admitted that she longed for it despite her "loathing". But fulfilling these *volksmoeder* ideals ascribed to women in her society, she possibly thought she was losing other parts of herself, maybe the "I" who lived on paper and whose wedding band was her pen. One feels compelled to ask: did these tensions in the formation of Smit's subjectivity and her split responses to dominant discourses perhaps form part of the reason she had (or maybe consciously created) a "bifurcated being"? Readers should bear in mind Alberts' explanation that the reason they never completed the book containing the correspondence of Atlantina and Adamastus was that Smit feared it would mean that she could not find a husband. In my mind, the above serves as further evidence of my reading of her decision to swap the gender of her male confessor, Kalie, to the female Anna in *Sekelmaan*. As already mentioned, the Atlantina-letters read like any other letters Smit wrote to Heese, for example. So why would Smit fear that publishing these letters would hamper her chances to marry? Hettie went as far as to describe her letters written to Heese as "losbandig" [immoral] and that she felt "skaam"[167] [ashamed] about it. Through contemporary frameworks concerning morality one would find it difficult to understand why Smit considered her letters as immoral. Yet, as a subject whose subjectivity was shaped by a rather parochial society, it is understandable that *she* thought they were "immoral" or could be perceived as such by others. Changing the gender of Heese to Anna then, Smit might have reasoned that it would protect her from criticism that *Sekelmaan* was "immoral" because she wrote these confessional letters to a woman, not a man.

Finally, the extract again highlights Smit's sadness that "burned in [her] heart" that she was "not beautiful". Intriguingly, she described women who were beautiful as "vlak", or vain, which can

[167] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 11/75. Date unknown. p. 2.

also be translated as vapid or shallow. Possibly, she begrudged beautiful women their pleasing appearance and consoled herself with the thought that she was artistic, not shallow. But it is again apparent that Smit's body, and the appearance thereof, was integral to the formation of her subjectivity. The professed lack of beauty made her feel insecure and as 'less'. Could this physical insecurity have played a part in splitting the voice of her subjectivity into two "I"s? Considering that she made a concerted effort to make Ione beautiful, her first other "I", I think such a reading is possible, if not probable. Sadly, it appears that she remained critical of her appearance for the remainder of her life. Katinka Heyns observed in a letter addressed to Botha in 1972, after a visit to the Smits in Pretoria, that Smit never left the house without one of her three wigs respectively named "Hannie, Annie + Sannie", that she was "kamerasku" [camera shy] and had an "abnormale ding oor haar voorkoms"[168] [abnormal thing about her appearance]. Heyns relates that she made offhand mention of a girl who committed suicide and that Smit immediately became invested in the story. She wanted to know everything about the girl's background, family and life. According to Heyns, she then asked: "'Was sy mooi?' 'Nee sê ek toe – glad nie', 'Ek't geweet!' roep sy uit – dis níé haar agtergrond nie, dis die spieël. Dis die spieël!' Ek weet – nog altyd, van kleins af, nie my broer en suster nie, net ek!!"[169] ['Was she pretty?' 'No I then said – not at all' 'I knew it!' she exclaimed – it's not her background, it's the mirror. It's the mirror! I know – always, from childhood onwards, not my brother and sister, only me!].

In this chapter, my reading of Smit's two (most prominent) "I"s, Hettie and Hessie, does not provide definitive analyses or answers. From what I have been able to determine, Smit created a confidante in her youth to alleviate her loneliness but ended up constructing an idealised version of herself. This other "I" changed throughout the years, not only in name, but also in characterisation and the amount of agency she asserted. Both Hettie and Hessie are immeasurable and difficult to define. Hessie appears to have taken control of her own "I" in certain instances, and yet, at times she simply becomes the scapegoat or bearer of Hettie's unwanted writings and thoughts. Hettie appears to have been hyper cognizant of her society and as a female embodied subject (marked by her gendered body) internalised the restrictions placed on women in her psyche. Hettie manifests internalised patriarchy which caused anxiety: whenever Hettie is

[168] K. Heyns: SULISMS, Amanda Botha ccollection 318, Dn. 318.K.H. 7 (3/1), 30 January 1972. p. 3.
[169] K. Heyns: SULISMS, Amanda Botha ccollection 318, Dn. 318.K.H. 7 (3/1), 30 January 1972. p. 4.

uncomfortable with something she feels or said she shifts the ownership onto Hessie. Hessie seemingly *never* refutes what Hettie attributes to her. Hessie's silence convinces me that she was the Other "I", the "I" created to protect Hettie (and thus Smit) from imagined or real threats. Hettie becomes Smit's primary "I". Whenever Smit speaks for herself, she does it through Hettie's "I", but when she feels uncomfortable with being either too bold, too weak, or too sentimental, Smit speaks through Hessie's "I" or blames Hessie for these utterances at a later stage. Smit's split subjectivity, to my mind, is partially a result of the gendered ideology of Afrikaner nationalism. As a woman, she frequently felt hampered by apparent lack of beauty *and* by sentimental female writing. Her apprehensions extended beyond the surface of the body to her interiority: she felt that she could not claim an agentive authorial "I" and doubted the merit of what she wrote.

The centrality of the body in Smit's life writing is foregrounded in this chapter. The gendered ideology of Afrikaner nationalism and its androcentric labour demarcation led to, among other things, a male dominated literary arena that disregarded women's writing as "trivial" or "sentimental". The biologically essentialist nature of Smit's society marked her as woman, as inferior; she thought of herself as "ugly", a woman born without a "marriage cloak". Unfortunately, it seems Smit was co-opted by patriarchy and internalised the gendered elements of Afrikaner nationalism, believing her writing to be "immature", too sentimental and a "psychological dreadfulness". I have argued in this chapter that Smit's *Sekelmaan* is autobiographical fiction and should henceforth be classified as such in future canons. If *Sekelmaan* then is the first autobiographical fiction to be written in Afrikaans, one could say that Smit is the 'mother' or "precursor" (Gilbert and Gubar 49) of the genre in Afrikaans literature. Certain questions remain unanswered, such as whether Smit herself chose to obfuscate the autobiographical aspects of *Sekelmaan* or whether the editors suggested she publish the text as a novel. Yet, as some extracts in this chapter have shown, she stated that she was writing a "book" but was troubled about its classification. However, Smit's decision to re-gender 'Anna' suggests her sensitivity to public opinion concerning both herself and her writing influenced Smit's private editorial decisions. Afrikaner men's anxieties about women and concomitant efforts to subjugate them by confining them to the domestic space was a reality during the 1920-40s. The next chapter of this thesis reflects on the period of roughly 1950-1980 and my reading of Joyce Waring's autobiographical texts illustrates how effective the re-establishment of gender hierarchies in the

early twentieth century (governed by the National Party) was, and the long shadows these endeavours cast.

Chapter Four

Gender and Race in Joyce Waring's "Politico-Humorous" Autobiographical Texts

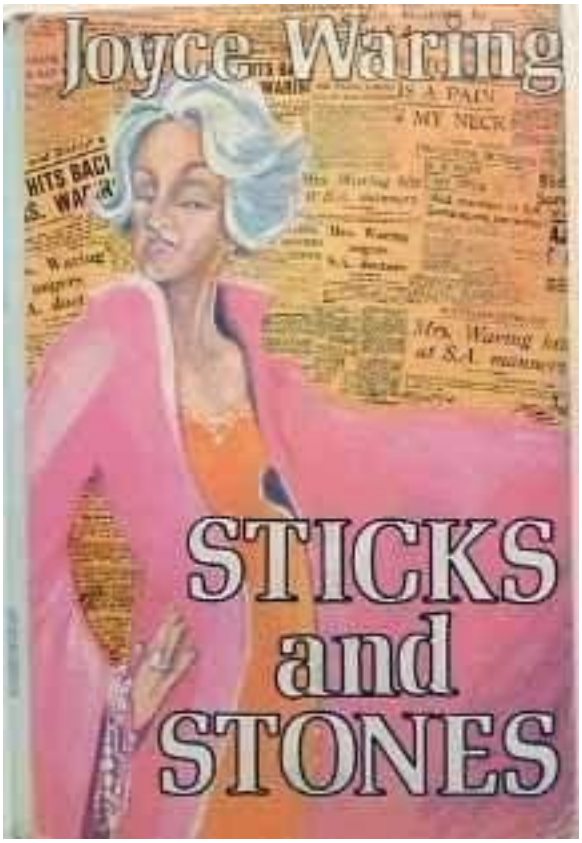

Figure 15 *Sticks and Stones* cover page

Having discussed the gendered nature of Afrikaner nationalism and its influence on Hettie Smit's subjectivity, as manifested in her letters, the focus now broadens to encompass a discussion of the imbalanced gendered Nationalist Party politics, and its discriminatory racist and ethnic ideologies and policies which impacted the subjectivity formation of the third subject of this study, Joyce Waring (1914-2003). The three autobiographical texts (I explain my use of this term further on) produced by Waring differ significantly in form, genre, tone and content from the private writings penned by Betty Molteno and Hettie Smit, respectively discussed. Conforming to the dominant white apartheid ideology of the 1950-1970s, Waring's political beliefs and consequent expressions in writing make for problematic reading. Yet, while she was supportive of the National Party's discriminatory apartheid policies of separate development and white minority rule, she

vociferously opposed the gender disparities of her society which were partly constructed and maintained by the political party of which she was a member. To my mind, she was more *and* less a product of her time than Molteno or Smit: she conformed to the hegemonic white discourses of grand apartheid (1960-70s) while simultaneously challenging numerous aspects of the status quo by publicly addressing women's subjugation and liberation in her writing. She critiqued patriarchy, a tenet of National Party politics, albeit in humorous, mocking tones, and produced life narratives in arresting experimental forms. Joyce Waring was a well-known political journalist and public figure in South Africa from the 1950s to the 1980s, yet her three autobiographical texts, *I'm no Lady* (1956), *Sticks and Stones* (1969) and *Hot Air* (1977), have only received *cursory attention* from scholars of politics, history, literature or life writing. This lack of interest in her work is probably due to her contentious, ambiguous writing and possibly her allegiance to the National Party (NP). Her husband, Frank Waring, was a Minister in the National Party Cabinet and she too was a member of the NP. Scholars encountering her work might feel that the texts are best left to further etiolate. As a complex and ambiguous subject, Waring's writing is very problematic, particularly when read against, say, contemporary feminist or postcolonial discourses. Most of her opinions would and should be considered inflammatory or politically incorrect by humanitarian standards. Yet, ignoring white women's autobiographical writing in which unpopular racial opinions are expressed does not ameliorate the racial and social injustices of the past, it merely "paper[s] over" it, to use Njabulo Ndebele's phrase (qtd. in West 117).

This thesis aims to contribute to the archive of scholarship on women's life writing in South Africa. My selection of three controversial and unconventional white women's life writing, consequently omitting for example black women's writing, would be even more misrepresentative if I did not include an examination of life writing texts expressing dominant racist ideologies associated with the colonial, postcolonial and apartheid eras of South Africa. This dissertation's primary concern is with autobiographical narratives and women's acts of self-representation to discuss how they scripted their respective subjectivities. Thus, the discrepant, divergent or alternative views of race narrated in the works of the subjects studied here constitute one dimension that serves to illustrate the diverse ways in which white women narrated subjectivity over a certain period. I have included Waring for her use of an interesting autobiographical form (experimental and aesthetically innovative) to narrate her subjectivity; to analyse the innovative, experimental, varied and novel (for the time of publication) writing techniques/stylistics she employed to represent the self; and

to examine the techniques she used to narrate her views on gender and race. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Judith Lütge Coullie read over eighty women's autobiographies and found that Waring was the only subject to openly support the National Party and to voice racist comments in her autobiographical texts (5). Ignoring the textual significance of her writing because of her racially discriminatory political views would be to ignore the specificities of her textual expression, and hence would further silence the atrocities of the past (Sarinjeive 96-111) in exactly the same way that history attempted to silence expression of women's experiences, thereby mimicking cultural acts of hiding or suppressing truths. Finally, such an exclusion would omit how a subject such as Waring's act of making visible the sexism of her white, patriarchal society, in retrospect, reveals her own complicity in these acts. As my analysis of her autobiographical texts shows, in her attempt to challenge for example the patriarchal structures in her society, she fails to investigate the power structures of the National Party and thereby does not acknowledge other forms of oppression and how the party gained and maintained their legitimacy through illegitimate means. The construction of her subjectivity in these texts, examined from a contemporary framework, illustrates the self-defeating nature of her attempts to challenge the status quo because she remained almost wilfully blind to the other power structures in her society, based on fallacies of white superiority, that *benefitted* her and constituted her subjectivity. Through self-narrative acts in her texts, she aims to present herself as a forceful, cheeky, challenging and intelligent provocateur, and to a degree successfully conveys this image of herself. But, ironically, this desired portrayal fails as her lack of interrogation of political power and legitimacy systematically emerges in her life narrative and sabotages the desired portrayal of her protagonist. I emphasise, my focus therefore centres on her interesting techniques of textual self-representation to examine *how* she portrayed herself by specifically investigating the ambivalences and paradoxes in her efforts of self-narration in relation to her reflection on gender and race politics (roughly 1956-1977).

The form of Waring's life writing differs from those of Molteno and Smit. I examine, exclusively, the *published* autobiographical texts written by Waring. Autobiography, as a genre, is dissimilar to the life writings I have hitherto examined. A key element of Molteno's journals, diaries, autobiographical poetry and letters, and Smit's letters and autobiographical fiction is that these forms of life writing are mostly *private*, except for letters that were addressed to others. However, as I have already discussed, Molteno sent some of her autobiographical poetry and diary entries to

family members and Smit published edited version of her letters, though marketed as fiction. Waring, in comparison to the other two subjects, frequently published opinion pieces and personal anecdotes in both English and Afrikaans newspapers from the 1940s onwards. In contrast, Waring's life writing was written with a larger audience in mind and was intended for *public* consumption. This would mean, as I show in this chapter, that she had to develop interesting, varied narrative strategies to portray her protagonist/self and to address audiences who might be, for example, hostile to some of her ideas or writing, offended by her refusal to accept her place as woman in society, or hostile about her allegiance to the National Party. I pay close attention to form and Waring's self-representative writing strategies in this chapter and discuss the particularities of her autobiographical narration at length in the following section of this chapter.

Waring's three autobiographical texts were produced and published over an extended period, spanning roughly twenty years. This provides readers with a unique perspective on shifts in her opinions, alternating political allegiances, and her continuously fluctuating subjectivity. In autobiographical narration, self-presentation or subjectivity is expressed by the autobiographical "I" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 71-72). The "I" is employed as textual vehicle to convey, transport and script subjectivity. As subjectivity shifts, morphs and grows, so does its textual "I" to accommodate and translate change. Because Waring produced three autobiographical narratives over roughly two decades, readers can track the shifts in the "I"'s self-representation, the narrator's tone and the protagonist's development, as well as the narrator's oscillating political opinions. On this account I note in my examination of Waring's textual self-representation, through her critique of gender relations in South Africa, that the author seemed compelled in her earlier work to utilise innovative aesthetic strategies and forms, such as written and visual mediums (cartoons, photographs, letters, newspaper articles, etc.), to 'sell' her scathing observations on gender inequality. Yet, as I illustrate, in her last work, *Hot Air* (1977), the narrator is less reliant on clever writing strategies to level her gender critiques because feminist discourses had become more commonplace than they were in 1956 when Waring's first text was published. Readers of her three texts are also privy to her discernible shift in textual opinions expressed regarding race relations in South Africa; shifts that coincided with her and her husband Frank Waring's move from the United Party to the National Party, discussed further on.

Theoretically, my analysis of Waring's life writing is underpinned by relevant life writing criticism, South African whiteness studies and South African feminist scholarship. My interest in this chapter is not to examine race as a category or racial relations as portrayed in Waring's writing because she penned events and opinions from a white perspective. To that effect, although I frequently refer to Waring's discussions of race, my primary aim is to examine whiteness in said period as revealed through Waring's pen and the effect whiteness had on the formation of her subjectivity. Though I discuss this at length, it is necessary to mention here in relation to the theoretical frameworks relied on in this chapter, that I do not apply a specific feminist lens or feminist analysis to interpret Waring's writing which reflects on her society's androcentrism. I do, however, rely on South African feminist scholarship for example as background information to situate Waring within her historical context and within a feminist tradition. My primary focus is on gender in the first interpretive section dealing with Waring's written responses to gender discrimination and the patriarchal discourse of white South Africa. Yet, in doing so, I also engage with the history of race relations in South Africa to explore how Waring narrates racialised stances on gender. This then accounts for the shorter final analytical section of this chapter examining the pervasive discriminatory attitudes exemplified by a specific kind of whiteness discernible in Waring's writing.

My method of investigation is partly to discuss her historical situatedness as subject for an analysis of how Waring's subjectivity both conformed to and opposed the dominant ideologies and societal frameworks of her time. Accordingly, the historical, economic and political context in which she produced these controversial and experimental self-fashioning texts largely informs my reading and consequent analysis of her textual expressions. As Smith and Watson explain in relation to autobiographical acts, "situatedness is especially crucial since life narratives are always symbolic interactions in the world. They are culturally and historically specific" (*Reading* 63). I endeavour in this chapter to examine her self-expression in relation to her writings regarding gender and race politics in the "culturally and historically specific" apartheid period of South African history (roughly 1956-1977). To summarise the important political backdrop against which to read Waring's autobiographical texts, it is necessary to remember that during apartheid, demarcated in this chapter as the period between 1948 and 1994, there were *predominantly*, though not exclusively, two oppositional centres of ideology and power. The one group, headed by the National Party (NP), endeavoured to maintain white superiority in the legal, political, economic

and cultural spheres, and entrenched white minority rule in the constitution of South Africa. The other group actively struggled to dislodge the social, economic, cultural and legal privileges extended to only white citizens to include *all* citizens of South Africa. This group was primarily spearheaded by the African National Congress (ANC), but included other groups such as the South African Communist Party, Unions and other grassroots political organisations.

It is perhaps fitting to begin a discussion of Waring's mostly narcissistic self-articulation with a consideration of the titles of her three texts, since these titles signal much about her protagonist's personality, self-fashioning, her style, and the tone of writing. The first text, *I'm no Lady*, spoke directly to her stance on women's place in society. In this text, she repeatedly described herself as "contrary" (1); public response to her incisive and divisive political critiques of men and the politics of South Africa often labelled her as a "monster" (4) woman. She considered herself 'not a lady' because she actively shirked the societal restrictions placed on women of her time. With the title *Sticks and Stones* Waring alluded to the "Old English Saying", quoted in the paratext, "Sticks and Stones May break my bones, But words will never hurt me!". The comment was aimed at the written and verbal responses her provocative writing elicited from the South African reading public. One can discern from her work that Waring consciously tried to anger members of society with *how* and *what* she wrote. It appears that she revelled in ruffling as many feathers as possible, offering the following explanation for her inflammatory writing: "I think my father, and I, if I may say so, thought as Oscar Wilde did when Wilde replied: 'I rarely think that anything I write is true'…'views belong to people who are not artists'. And like Wilde, my father and I were tongue in cheek, prepared to write on either side as it suited our impish humour" (*Hot Air* 92). *Hot Air*, her third autobiographical text, exemplifies her style of writing. She used, I argue throughout, self-deprecating humour to veil her pride or to 'soften' her harsh criticism of her society. About her writing she would say: "Hot Air, it just disappears into the atmosphere and leaves behind not a trace of their political or ecological smog!" (8). This statement suggests that she renounced her writing as letting off hot air that would simply evaporate and have no effect. My study of Waring's work leaves me with the awareness that she had to undermine her own writing precisely because she was a *woman*. For instance, in *Hot Air* she explained that she was under the distinct impression that parliament, which consisted of mostly white men, did not think she "behave[d] as she ought" (7), that she was "practically 'warned off' the political turf" after "several head-on collisions in [her] political writing", and that her husband apparently had to promise his parliamentary caucus

that she would be returned to "the brood mare farm" (7) because her writing antagonised politicians and citizens alike. The use of 'the brood mare farm' in this instance reflects the perspectives of white, male politicians who thought she had to stick to her role as *woman* (and was possibly a dig at her love of horse-riding), to fulfil her biological reproductive role, to be a paragon of domesticity, and not a producer of satirical political journalism in which she ridiculed them. Yet, in using self-deprecating humour she managed to stick the knife in, turn it, *and* then proverbially managed to escape with murder. To explain further: by purporting to be only producing "hot air" and seemingly mocking herself, Waring voiced satirical, witty political commentary interlaced with personal anecdotes while veiling her scathing critiques of South African politics and politicians and hiding her derisive commentary behind humour. With some thoughts of personality and style in mind, I now proceed to provide a brief biography of Waring.

Waring was born on Tempe, a farm near Wolwehoek, a town in the then Orange Free State (now Free State province), to Arthur and Lillie Barlow. Waring frequently mentioned her parents in her autobiographical texts. She attributed much of her successes (and quirks) to them. Her subjectivity as a young girl, adult journalist and politician was clearly influenced by their involvement in politics and journalism. Arthur Barlow was a household name during his lifetime; renowned as journalist, author and politician and member of the Labour Party and later the United Party. He launched two newspapers, *Arthur Barlow Weekly* and *Sunday Express*, with the assistance of his wife, who brought in considerable funding as procurer of advertisements (*Sticks and Stones* 10; *I'm no Lady* 72-73). Lillie Barlow also served on the executive board of her husband's newspapers and was a financial partner. She was, according to Waring, "too intelligent and lively to just be a stay-at-home mother" and became a shrewd businessperson (*Lady* 62) who always managed her own enterprises. Waring mentions that her parents decided to raise all their children (four daughters and one son) to pursue individual professional careers and "drove [the family unmercifully]" (*Sticks* 10). Consequently, the young Joyce aspired to become the "greatest advocate the world has ever seen", not at all an unreachable goal given the intellectual and successful family she was born into. Her three sisters all dreamt of becoming medical "doctors" (*Lady* 4), which they eventually did (*Stones* 149). Women doctors, medical or academic, were not common at the time. Although Waring admits that it was "a most unusual idea" (*Lady* 4) for women to aspire to such professions in the early twentieth century, especially in South Africa, it was not strange for her family to achieve such academic heights. Indeed, Waring's disabled

"spastic" brother Trafford obtained a doctorate (Doctor of Law), encouraged by Lillie Barlow, who "cajoled, persuaded and pushed him to use the powers he had" (*Lady* 62).

In the 1930s (the precise date is not provided in the texts) Waring graduated with a BA from the University of Cape Town (*Lady* 17). She then attended Law School at the Johannesburg Technicon. However, she did not complete her law degree because she married Frank Waring and no longer pursued a legal profession. The couple met while Frank was still playing rugby for the Springboks (the national team). She claimed she was initially not interested in him, but after many chance meetings, they fell in love and married when Joyce Waring was only twenty years old. They were married for sixty years until Frank's death in 2000 (Carew 10 January 2003). Interestingly, Waring admitted she navigated her professional rugby-playing husband's interest into politics because she herself harboured a deep passion for politics. Apparently, her interest in politics was fostered at a young age and forcefully encouraged by her father. She recalled how, at the age of 17, she travelled to Bloemfontein from Cape Town (at the time she was a student) to campaign for the Labour Party, representing her father, "the taskmaster" of her political sensibility. On this occasion, she made many speeches on behalf of Arthur Barlow (*Lady* 5). In 1943 Frank Waring stood for parliament for the Orange Grove seat and won (*Lady* 1; 33), while Joyce Waring stood and was victorious as an Independent candidate for the City Council of Johannesburg. Waring had parliamentary ambitions and in 1952 stood for the Houghton seat as UP member but lost to Helen Suzman, who then became a Member of Parliament in 1953 (Carew 10 January 2003). Apart from their political endeavours, Joyce and Frank Waring had a busy domestic life raising their three children: two girls, Adrienne and Frances, and a boy, Michael.

Joyce colourfully, and with what readers would come to recognise as her acerbic wit or sarcasm, described her life as wife of a member of parliament and later as wife of a minister. Her narrations paint an arresting picture of the lifestyle of South African politicians. At the time, MPs were required to spend six months of the year in Cape Town for the duration of the parliamentary sitting. The government did not provide MPs with accommodation; they had to organise their own living arrangements. Because the cost of renting property in Cape Town was so high, the Warings, for more than 12 consecutive years, camped with tents and a caravan at Glencairn, near Cape Town. With much wit, Waring renders her account of everything she had to pack, and the trouble involved in moving three complaining children, two dogs and a cat (the number and type of pets changed

over time (*Lady* 38-46). While camping at Glencairn, the Warings rented out their own house in Johannesburg and Joyce Waring captures in detail the dynamics of their troubles with tenants who did not pay their rent, stole pots and pans, and the general misuse of the property (*Lady* 47-59).

Her narratives convey not only a sense of her experiences as a politician's wife, but also the particulars, the challenges and the transformations of her own political alliances that she negotiated between civic and private life. While at high school, she supported and stood for student parliament as a Labour Party candidate. The Labour Party was a democratic socialist party (formed in 1910 and disbanded in 1958) that sought the advancement and protection of white workers, specifically in urban areas.[170] As Waring matured, her politics developed and changed but the seeds of political interest sown during her youth were an adumbration of her involvement in South African politics for the remainder of her life. During her years at university, she was "still on the Left and became a Progressive" (*Lady* 82). Later, she and her husband became members of the United Party (UP)[171] and in the 1960s they joined the National Party (NP),[172] where Frank served as Minister of

[170] The Labour Party endeavoured to protect workers from losing their positions to non-white workers, who were willing to work for lower wages (Krüger 479). According to her own narration, Joyce Waring was the only candidate in the "capitalistic school" (*Lady* 82) who was not a member or supporter of the South African Party (SAP). The SAP was formed in 1910 and the ruling party in the Union of South Africa up until 1924, except for a brief period in 1920. The constitutional principles, aims and policy of the SAP included: the acknowledgement of the Union of South Africa as a Constitutional Monarchy under Britain, the equal footing of Afrikaans and English in schools and on governmental level, the unity and support for both English and Afrikaans whites and their betterment, the effort to resolve the "Bantu-question" (Krüger 480) in South Africa, the promotion of white immigration and the banning of Indian immigration (Krüger 480).

[171] The United South African National Party, in colloquial phrase referred to as the United Party (or *smelters*), was a coalition formed in 1934 between the National Party (led by General Barry Hertzog at the time), the South African Party (led by Hertzog's political rival General Jan Smuts) and the Unionist Party (O'Meara 22; Fisher 82-83). The UP was the ruling party in South Africa between 1934-1948 until the Reunited National Party won at the polls under the leadership of D.F. Malan. This particular National Party governed South Africa up until the democratic elections in 1994 and ushered in what is termed apartheid. Apartheid, or separate development, was systematically implemented by the National Party (and before that the SAP and the UP) through various racist and discriminatory laws, privileging the white minority and severely policing the movements and labour opportunities of the non-white majority. The coalition facilitated between Hertzog and Smuts in 1934 was primarily due to fears of an exclusionary Afrikaner party forming that would again divide South Africa. In addition, the threat of war in Europe loomed and the generals wanted to support Britain, not Germany. Afrikaners who supported Malan and many other South Africans wanted to side with Germany in World War II or preferred to remain neutral about war in Europe but were prohibited by the actions taken first by Hertzog, and then Smuts (Fisher 282-287; O'Meara 22).

[172] In 1935, Malan and other conservative nationalist Afrikaners broke the ranks of Hertzog's National Party because they opposed the merger with the South African Party. They formed the Purified National Party

Information (later of Sport, Forestry, Tourism and Indian Affairs) until the early 1970s. To conclude my biographical overview: little public information is available of Waring's life following the publication of her three autobiographical texts and the couple's retirement from political life.

Structurally then, this chapter is divided into four sections. The following subsection deals with form. I explain why I use the term autobiographical texts to describe Waring's publications and reflect on the reasons I consider her particular style as distinctive in South African women's life writing practices. To elucidate my discussion of gender, I first include an outline of South African feminism and feminist scholarship from 1950-1980, followed by my first interpretive section which analyses Waring's critique of gender relations in South Africa. In the final interpretive section, I address the significant effect of the belief in the inherent superiority of whiteness on the formation of Waring's subjectivity and consequent writing on race politics.

Questions of Genre: Waring's Autobiographical Texts

Waring's three published texts do not conform to the autobiographical conventions associated with the time in either form, structure, or style and are thus unconventional and innovative. To the best of my knowledge, Waring was the first English-speaking South African woman to publish this kind of hybrid autobiographical form. She used mixed written and visual mediums to create a hybrid form of autobiographical storytelling. The texts are compiled of sources such as letters, her own newspaper articles, chapters specifically penned for the books, cartoons, photographs, travel narratives, testimonies, and articles written by others to which she comments in a sort of political reportage. The text is an ensemble of various subgenres of life writing marked in its entirety by Waring's "politico-humorous" (*Hot Air* 15) style employed throughout. Waring's political satire, and the ensemble texts in their entirety, are reminiscent of a popular culture[173] style or "tongue in cheek" (*Hot Air* 91) commentary, as Waring described it, rather than 'serious' political

and later the Reunited National Party in 1939 when more of the United Party members left their party because they objected to joining Britain in the war against Germany. Later, after 1948, the party was simply referred to as the National Party.

[173] By popular culture I mean that Waring wrote in a simplistic, straightforward and witty style to appeal to a large section of the population. Many of the chapters in her autobiographical texts were first published in newspapers and the intent was that the literate masses could read her work in the dailies of the time. Her intended audience was not the intellectual elite of her society.

autobiography. 'Serious' political autobiographies written by women of the period would include, for example, Ruth First's *117 Days: An Account of Confinement and Interrogation Under the South African 90-Day Detention Law* (1969), and Bertha Solomon's political autobiography *Time Remembered: The Story of a Fight* (1968). I return to these two women and their political autobiographies in my analysis of Waring's autobiographical texts. Although many autobiographies or life narratives blur generic boundaries, I consider Waring's texts as unconventional and innovative because she was, to the best of my knowledge, the first South African woman to do so, but more importantly, she developed interesting techniques of self-expression not generally used by women of the period. For example, she juxtaposed written and visual materials to contrast her domestic (motherhood, wifehood) and professional lives (journalist, politician) in relation to her feminist consciousness. Suffice it to say, each image/cartoon tells a story in addition to the written text; a cunning strategy, I argue, employed to voice Waring's critique of sexism in her society. It seems she utilised humour as defence mechanism against vilification. This construction of a hybrid form then in itself becomes an aesthetic feature that reflects the multi-dimensional aspects of Waring's subjectivity and her attempt to narrate her fragmented sense of self, and her fragmented gender experience, for example.

I use 'autobiographical texts' in this instance as an umbrella term for Waring's three books. The term autobiographical text suggests a kind of writing *related* to autobiography in which the author writes about herself and her own 'I' in various and imaginative ways to present said 'I' to the public. However, my use further signals that the unusual composition of the Waring's *texts* does not conform to conventions of form or related subgenres of life writing of the time, such as memoir or autobiography, because of its multimodal hybridity and ensemble form. I have been unable to locate a term that adequately captures the seemingly motley collection of essays and cuttings in Waring's 'autobiographies'. Waring's texts could probably be classified as memoirs, autobiographies, personal essays, as a collection of journalistic writing, political autobiography etc., but to me, these genres and their classification do not capture the complexity of the texts' assemblage and form. My aim here, however, is not to quibble about life writing nomenclature, so I briefly extrapolate on my choice of the term 'autobiographical texts'. Although the texts perform autobiographical acts, the form, in my view, diverges too much to classify these texts as autobiographies. Though I do not regard Waring's texts as generic autobiographies, I still read

Waring's negotiated relationship between author, narrator and protagonist as sharing the "same name and vital statistics" (Couser 37). While I consider author, narrator and protagonist as representational of the 'real' person (Waring), I bear in mind the notion that all autobiographical subjects are constructed as fictions of self, as mentioned in my introductory chapter. 'Truth', or how Waring relates memory and her subjective interpretations of events, is especially problematic to interpret because, as mentioned earlier, she admitted to writing on either side of a debate just to play devil's advocate or to wilfully anger people. 'Truth' or *her* opinion might not have been the motivating factor behind some of her penned observations of political writing. Despite this admission on her part, Waring regularly tried to authenticate her narrative by citing well-known political figures of her time to lend weight to her opinions.

As I mentioned, one of the key features of Waring's autobiographical texts is the blending or juxtaposition of visual and textual elements. The visual and textual elements in these texts become "relational"; neither text "subordinat[ing]" the other: "When visual and textual modes run parallel to each other, their different vocabularies overlay different versions of autobiographical subjectivity" and are thus in "dialogue" (Smith and Watson "Mapping women's self-representation",[174] narrating different aspects of the author's subjectivity. Furthermore, the relationship between the visual and the textual modes are one of "documentary interface, the textual is used to situate the visual […] within a context of social and cultural meaning" ("Mapping"). By using documentary interface, "artists assemble and juxtapose such documents of everyday life as newspapers and official records to place the autobiographical subject in a sociocultural surround" ("Mapping"). Regarding women's writing practices in which authors merge the textual and visual with documentary interfacing, Smith and Watson explain that "[t]hese practices make visible the official, often stereotyped, histories through which women's lives have conventionally been 'framed' in order to interrogate them" ("Mapping"). The form and visual elements of these texts are of particular interest to me and I make frequent mention of the structure, layout, as well as the paratextual information such as editor's notes, blurbs and cover pages in my analysis of her writing. The positioning of cartoons, in particular, is relational to the textual aspects of Waring's writing but these visuals are also constituted by documentary interfacing: they visually

[174] This in-text citation omits page numbers because this online book, available at https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/maize/mpub9739969/1:14/--life-writing-in-the-long-run-a-smith-watson-autobiography?rgn=div1;view=toc does not contain page numbers.

narrate specific social and cultural contexts discussed in the texts to interrogate, for example, women's ascribed domestic roles. Because of space constraints, I do not discuss each cartoon featured in the narratives in detail in this chapter, but the relational dialogue between cartoons and text clarify the meaning of the cartoons for any reader. An in-depth analysis of every cartoon is uncalled for because in unity the images 'speak' back to my discussion of her texts; readers could easily 'read' these visual images in dialogue with my broader argument. The visual elements, especially the cartoons of Waring by the artists Leyden and Annette Stork, as well as other multimodal aspects of the texts (such as the cover pages and her commentary on newspaper articles), communicate diverse self-representational aspects of Waring's narrating and narrated "I",[175] and form an important part of my analysis of her texts.

Waring's first autobiography, *I'm no Lady*, is an amalgamation of published articles that originally appeared in the magazine newspaper *Outspan* and the newspaper *Die Vaderland*. The life narrative further consists of chapters specifically written for *Lady* to provide biographical information of herself and her family, as well as visual images such as cartoons illustrating events in Waring's life. These collected articles are divided into chapters. However, as is the case in each of the autobiographical texts, she does not generally mention whether or where the chapters she included were published previously, or whether a specific chapter was written for the text. The cartoonist or illustrator, simply referred to as Leyden[176] in the dedication of *I'm no Lady*, generally caricatures Waring, people in her life, and her experiences. These cartoons (see figures 20, 22, 23 and 24) are effective tools Waring relied on for their humorous caricaturing to combat the snarky, satirical and at times even rude statements she loved to express. Seemingly turning herself into the joke of her own stories was a strategy Waring employed, I argue, in an attempt to negotiate the outrage her writing might cause. The cartoons also add visual stimulation to the text and symbolically suggest the (misguided) impression that the book was 'not too serious', a point I return to.

[175] A brief definition is called for here. According to Smith and Watson, the narrating "I" is the voice of the author, telling the story. The narrated "I" is the way the protagonist is portrayed through narration (*Reading* 72-73). With reference to Françoise Lionnet, they suggest that "the narrated 'I' is the subject of history whereas the narrating 'I' is the agent of discourse" (73). Waring's narrating "I", for example, is self-assured. Yet, as I show, her narrated "I", though portrayed as self-assured, comes across as privileged, catty, unsympathetic with the plight of others not of her race and class, thus, as ignorant.

[176] The artist *might have* been Jock Michael Leyden (1908-2000) who started his career at the *Natal Daily Advertiser* and who drew satirical cartoons about sport, parliamentarians and ministers. *Time* magazine named him one of the six best cartoonists of the twentieth century (*South African History Online* 2018).

The second autobiography, *Sticks and Stones*, published 13 years after *I'm no Lady*, also assembles an interesting collection of diverse genres of writing. Much space is dedicated to discussions of her personal view of politics, echoing opinions expressed in her print media articles. It further includes: letters from her father in which he chastised her for her lack of ambition and determination; extracts from newspaper articles by other writers to which she responds; personal essays about her family, their pets and anecdotes about her own passion for horse riding (see figure 16).

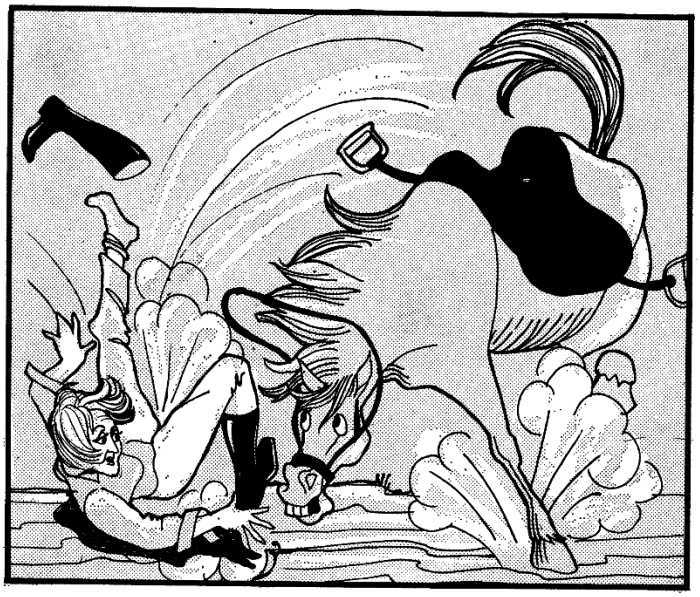

Figure 16 "… at the second jump he stopped dead and pitched me over his head …"

Photographs of herself, the Waring family and acquaintances further serve to memorialise identity (see figures 17 and 18).

Figure 17 "Some tea Mr. Minister? Drink it while you can." Frank appointed Minister of Information 1961.

"Tout Famille". Mike's 21st. What has annoyed Frances? Arnim and Adrienne, Frank and Joyce, Michael, Frances and Phil.
— Hausmann

Figure 18 "Tout Famille". Mike's 21st. What has annoyed Frances? Arnim and Adrienne, Frank and Joyce, Michael, Frances and Phil.

As is the case in *I'm no Lady*, cartoons are again included, this time by Annette Stork (see figures 15, 16, 19 and 21) not only to caricature Waring but to satirise some of the ways in which she had been perceived, for instance by conservative Afrikaners, through techniques of "documentary interface".

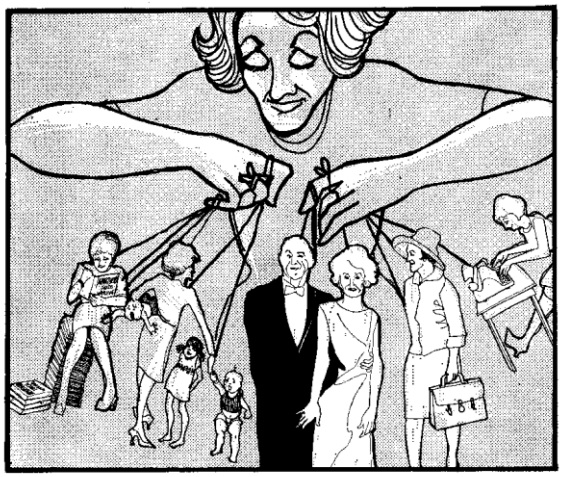

Figure 19 "Afrikaans, typing, and shorthand too, and then you had to be a leader as well!"

Figure 20 "An audience of men with a ringside seat"

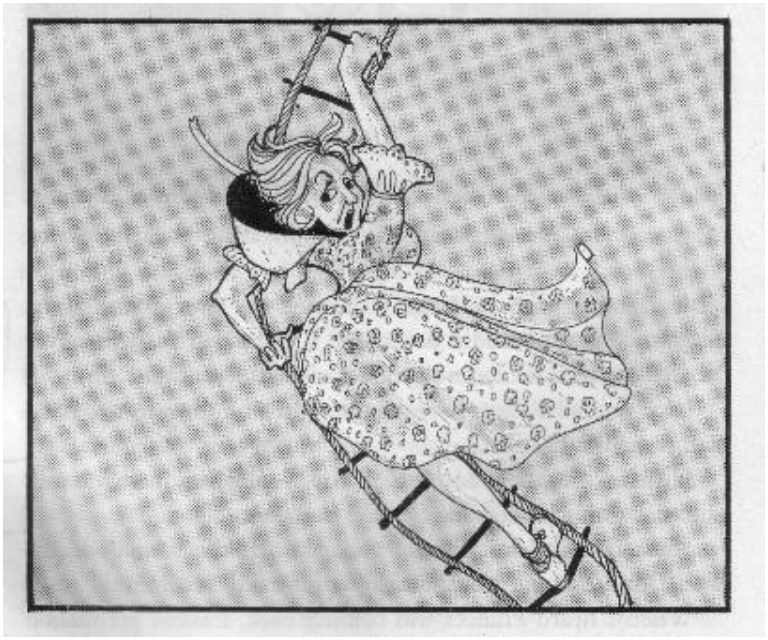

Figure 21 "Mevrou moet weet sy is mos 'n volksmoeder"

In *Hot Air* Waring continued the use of diverse mediums to narrate subjectivity. Here she added a collection of other media materials, such as her own newspaper articles written for the *Cape Times* (at the behest of Victor Norton) in which she spun yarns about her family and her life as an MP and Minister's wife, and transcribed radio broadcasts aired on SABC in 1970. On this occasion, she was invited by announcer/producer Patrick Kohler to share her "pearls of wisdom" (7) with listeners. These three to four-minute broadcasts, aired once per week, ran for about a year.

Concerning other forms of paratextual information about the autobiographical texts, the front covers of the first two autobiographical texts each portray a caricature of Waring overlaid on lettering (see figures 15 and 22).

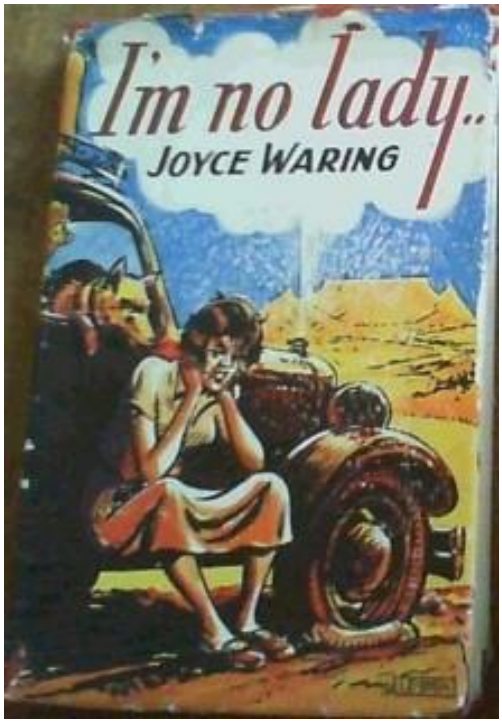

Figure 22 *I'm no Lady* cover page

The cover image of *I'm no Lady* caricatures Waring as frustrated and defeated: the car on which she sits seems to have a flat tyre, her posture is hunched over, and she sits head in hands, utterly miserable. On *Sticks and Stones,* the caricature of Waring, exuding elegance and possibly snobbery, looking down her nose at the viewer, is superimposed on newspaper clippings of public responses to her writing with titles such as "Mrs Waring hits at S.A. manners", "Mrs. Waring angers SA doctors", etc. The cover of the third text features a photograph of a stylish Waring,

taken by photographer Richard Bell. Here she appears struggling to smile on demand. Bejewelled in pearls and diamonds, clutching fashionable sunglasses, she sits on a chair at a table (see figure 22). The use of caricatures for the front covers of two of the autobiographical texts implies that Waring and the publishing houses marketed her texts as tongue-in-cheek or satirical political and personal commentary. This framing, or marketing ploy, was probably an attempt to soften the content of her writing, which could be very scathing. In contrast, the photograph used for the cover of the third autobiographical text instead of a cartoon suggests that Waring might no longer have thought it necessary to turn herself into a caricature for her writing to have an impact. She was a well-known political figure by the 1970s.

Figure 23 *Hot Air* cover page

It was necessary to reflect on the hybrid form of Waring's autobiographical text since I discuss at length the skilful articulation of her private and public identity in her use of personal anecdotes and self-reflections interspersed with political commentary that draws on her role as politician's wife, politician and journalist. My interest is in the politics of the aesthetics she employed (*how*

she writes about the self; the visual and textual techniques she used) and the politics of textual identity construction (negotiation of the private and public identity). As a woman in this specific historical context (1950-1980), where women were considered politically and socially negligible, and in a time when women's autobiographical (and other) writing was irreverently disregarded or relegated to sphere of 'homely' genres (Gilmore 2), Waring managed with dexterous writing techniques to draw attention to the complexities of merging motherhood and womanhood (feminine domain) with a career in politics (masculine domain), albeit from a specific socio-cultural, race and ethnic stance. The platform she utilised to achieve this merger was her innovative kind of political life writing. She used her satirical style to criticise the androcentric nature of South African politics and patriarchal society. She advocated that womanhood, wifehood and motherhood should not undermine a woman's ability to pursue a career in politics. Waring's writing is not exceptional in its claim for women's rights and political empowerment. Its significance lies in the ways in which she narrates subjectivity and (white) women's empowerment from within a context and category of separatist privilege and power. Yet, that said, Waring focused exclusively on white women's participation and completely excluded black women, something I find deeply problematic. To situate her work and my analysis, I now turn to an overview of South African feminism and feminist scholarship of the period in which Waring wrote.

Feminism and Feminist Scholarship in South Africa

To the best of my knowledge, as I will illustrate in the following paragraphs, there are lacunae in the feminist writing produced in the period 1950-1980 in South Africa, largely due to the absence of a mass mobilisation of South African women on issues specifically related to gender, sex and other women's issues (Lazar 103). However, there were many women's groups (in political parties and as members of women's unions) who advocated, amongst other more pressing concerns, for women's rights, liberation, and representation (Berger 185-197; Gasa 207-220; Meintjies 47-63). It is therefore most probable that 'feminist' texts penned in the period 1950-1980 in newspapers and magazines (or as pamphlets and charters) simply need to be excavated for a more comprehensive image of women's liberation struggles in South Africa. There was no pronounced 'second-wave' feminist movement (for lack of a better term) in South Africa at the time (Bozzoli 139; Wolpe 85-86; Lazar 103). Previously, however, Olive Schreiner's writing and the South African suffragettes (early twentieth century) could be viewed as a distinct mobilisation of white

women to obtain equal voting rights (for white women) and thus as representative of a first 'wave' of South African feminism. Some women of this group and period, such as Schreiner, were concerned and spoke out about much more than simply enfranchisement and women's legal rights, essentially addressing concerns voiced by second-wave feminists in later decades. Further, many South African suffragettes advocated for equal voting rights for black and white women (Van Niekerk 357). Most scholars and critics agree that no clear theoretical position or standpoint in South African scholarship or history exists that marks a specific second-wave South African feminist tradition (Daymond "Introduction" xiv-xv; Wolpe 85-86; Steyn 50). To explain the above, I first discuss the history of women's liberation in South Africa and then incorporate critical studies that reflect on feminist scholarship and the (lack of a fixed or specific) feminist tradition in South Africa.

Olive Schreiner is hailed by many a critic as one of the (if not *the*) most important feminists of the nineteenth century. Generally, Schreiner and her writing mark for many critics the 'birth' of feminism and feminist writing in South Africa. Her treaty on the position of women in society titled *Woman and Labour* (1911)[177] is arguably one of the most important early critical works written by a feminist and South African. Schreiner famously insisted that sex / gender issues did not exist in isolation and that class and labour relations needed to be addressed simultaneously and were just as imperative to understanding women's gendered position in their respective societies. This particular line of inquiry was later reintroduced by Marxist revisionist feminists such as Belinda Bozzoli in 1983. Intriguingly, although Bozzoli is credited with incorporating gender as a necessary frame of reference into South African Marxist revisionism, Schreiner already did this as early as 1911. However, one could argue that the socialist principles of the women's unions from the 1930s onwards already incorporated gender into class issues *in practice*, not theory. Furthermore, Schreiner asserted that "gender identity was a social construct that controls women

[177] In the Editors' Preface of the 1975 commemorative edition of Schreiner's *Woman and Labour*, Adèlemarie van der Spuy (one of the two editors) is introduced as a Director of Companies and the Chairwoman of the Group "'Action 75 Aksie' – founded in 1975 to promote the recognition of women's legal and economic identity and status in South Africa". Further in this preface, Van der Spuy and Adriaan Secundus van der Spuy write, "the Aquarian Age (21st century) is beckoning all humanity. The world is awakening at last to the dormant wisdom of its Women, far too long the Scapegoats, the Sorcerers, the Sacrificers and the shameful Sex Symbols of our male-dominated Societies" (iii). I was unable to find any research about the Action 75 Aksie women's group or even sources that referred to the group. This example illustrates my discussion in this section pertaining to a gap in South African scholarship about feminist writing and feminist groups of the period 1950-1980.

– a pioneering insight that is usually attributed to Simone de Beauvoir" (Daymond "Introduction" xxx-xxxi). Shortly after the publication of *Woman and Labour*, Marie du Toit published *Vrou en Feminist, of iets oor die vrouevraagstuk* (1921) [Woman and Feminist, or Something About the Women's Issue] (Cloete's translation), which was the first text in Afrikaans in which the word 'feminist' appeared in the title (Cloete 120). The text calls on women to liberate themselves and gain equal footing to men, specifically in matters of politics and government (Cloete 120). To my mind, these are the two most noteworthy non-fictional treatises on women and feminism before the enfranchisement of white women in 1930. Although many pamphlets and booklets must have been published by women's organisations at the time (such as Mary Fitzgerald's (Berger 186-187)), I do not discuss those publications here. I have already detailed in my previous chapter the rise of Afrikaner nationalism in the early twentieth century and the patriarchal nature and rhetoric embedded in the construction of the state that aimed, in part, to silence and subjugate women. I also discussed white women's involvement in the suffrage movement and the role of Afrikaner women in defending the phallocentric function and imagining of the state. The focus of this chapter now shifts to English-speaking South African white women and the role women of other races and ethnicities played in dismantling and/or opposing state structures of oppression and sexism.

As was the case with Afrikaner women in the first decades of the twentieth century (as discussed in the previous chapter), English liberals and black, Indian and coloured[178] women joined non-profit, cultural and church organisations as well as political parties to participate in public life. Cherryl Walker, in *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (1982), traces for example the history of seemingly disparate political parties, unions and socio-political groups that formed the Federation of South African Women (FSAW, in 1954) and the women's march in 1956 against the apartheid government's pass policy. The march consisted of approximately 10 000 – 20 000 women who vehemently and openly objected to the implementation of the discriminatory pass

[178] 'Coloured' is not a derogatory racial slur in South Africa as is the case in other countries such as the United States of America. Coloureds are a racial and ethnic group of people in South Africa, mostly descended from the intermixing of white masters and slaves from "South and East India and from East Africa" (Erasmus 21) as well as from indigenous South African groups like the San and Khoikhoi, whose skins were brown. However, during apartheid the National Party, obsessed with racial classification, placed "colouredness as a category midway between black and white" (Erasmus 18), further problematising the cultural identity of coloureds. Erasmus explains that "[c]olouredness must be understood as a creolized cultural identity" (22) and that being coloured is marked by both "lived experience of white domination" and by its historical complicity with the "subordination of the black Africans" (24).

laws. Walker mentions that it was probably the most "successful and militant of any resistance campaign mounted at that time" (viii). The FSAW was a union between the women belonging to the African National Congress (ANC), the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), the South African Indian Congress (SAIG) "and various trade unions and grassroots political organisations" (Walker vii). The Black Sash was also part of this march to the Union buildings in Pretoria to protest the restriction of the movement of African labourers in the city. The Black Sash organisation was formed in 1955 and its members were white, mostly middle-class women. Their primary objective was to protest the apartheid government's policies and treatment of African and other people of colour. According to their official website, they also offered bailouts to African women who were arrested because they did not have a pass, and offered free legal aid to disenfranchised groups (*Black Sash Making Human Rights Real* 2017). In her autobiography, the Afrikaans author M.E.R. mentions that Afrikaner women in the years leading up to enfranchisement did not participate in the suffrage movement because they focused on what they perceived as a larger political concern, the poor white question (17). The back-benching of women's rights and questions by women's groups in favour of more 'pressing concerns' appears pervasive in South African history. Daymond asserts: "Most historians agree that the issue of race was always what dominated, excluding that of gender" ("Introduction" xxviii). For black, white, and coloured women of diverse ethnic backgrounds, race and the oppression of any non-white group had primacy in activist circles, at least up until the transition to a democratic South Africa in the early 1990s (Steyn 42-43; Berger 186; Meintjies 49-50). Therefore, there was no observable or significant large 'movement' or mobilisation of women to address first and foremost *women's* oppression in general and to challenge sexist laws and policy. However, the absence of a structured mass movement does not imply that certain groups or individuals did not challenge the patriarchal and legislative oppressions of government. The Garment Workers' Union in the Transvaal and the Food and Canning Workers' Union from the Cape, for example, focused not only on the working conditions and wages of women but extended their mandate to include all aspects of women's lives, even their living and domestic conditions. As Iris Berger explains: "Through union activities, women were politicised, introduced to pressing issues of the time and to a new world of debate, organising and protest" (204). As this chapter indicates, Waring, for example, did challenge the patriarchal construction of her society and publicly criticised women's inferior gender position; yet her concerns generally seem to reflect a more self-centred and self-serving agenda that

excluded working-class women and can be further problematised for its exclusion of non-white women. I discuss this further on.

Second-wave feminism of the 1960s and 70s in Western countries are easier to define and discuss, given that there was a movement of women who opposed various structures and strictures of female oppression. Moreover, many academics wrote treatises, manifestos and critical discussions centred on the topic of women and women's issues, emancipation and liberation. Three definitive streams of feminist thought and critique developed in the Western world: radical, Marxist and liberal. Were explains:

> Radical feminism sees all societies as patriarchal and men as the source of women's oppression. It advocates for legislative measures to rectify women's inferiority in society. The movement has however been criticised for its association with intellectual white middle-class women. Marxist feminism views class as the source of social inequality. Unlike radicalism, it focuses on the economy as the originator of women's inferiority. It has been criticised for its inability to conceive of women's oppression outside the structures of capitalist production. Liberal feminism recognises the role of culture in women's struggles. This wave has however been criticised for its demand for gender equality as opposed to equity. (14-15)

What should be added to the above list of mainstream feminism is the multiracial and anti-racist feminism of the USA that developed alongside these strands and made a significant impact on second-wave feminism from the 1970s onwards (Thompson 337). Multiracial feminism contended that race, gender, class, nationality and sexuality were all imperative factors to consider when discussing women's subjugation and liberation. In 1994 a collection of chapters and essays by feminist scholars were collected in *South African Feminism: Writing, Theory, and Criticism 1990-1994* (1996) and edited by Margaret Daymond. In the introduction to the collection, Daymond notes that "cultural feminism in South Africa does not form a single, coherent movement" (xiv). She adds that a "plurality of theoretical positions" (xv) were accepted throughout the 1970s to the mid-1990s but that "some degree of coherence, of common purpose [for literary-cultural feminists], is called for" (xv). Despite this call in the 1990s by academics, no consensus, coherence or common purpose has been reached by feminists today as is evident in Van der Spuy and Clowes' review of more recent publications on South African feminist and women's histories (211-235). To make sense of the paucity of an academic feminist tradition until very recent decades, Daymond writes that "[i]t is perhaps because the issue of power has been focused on race and has seldom

been gendered in South African writing that black and white women now face major obstacles to the development of a community of purpose" (xix). My analysis of Waring's observations on gender relations in her autobiographical writing adds to these discussions.

Given the dearth of a specific South African feminist tradition of inquiry during the 1960s, I locate my analysis of Waring's autobiographical texts in its historical and contextual situatedness. Thus, the lens through which I examine Waring's 'feminist' writing is female subjectivity: how did she *react* to the dominant gender discourses of her time that marked her as biologically inferior (because she possessed a female body) and therefore *lacking* political, social and cultural capital *despite* the fact that she hailed from a privileged socio-cultural position? Waring's critique of men and patriarchy was termagant and ruffled feathers, but her exclusive brand of feminism shared the exclusionary tendencies of mainstream or hegemonic second-wave feminism in the USA (and elsewhere), which have been widely criticised (Thompson 337; Enke 544; Clarke Mane 71). Waring's exclusion of women of other races was even more pronounced (and morally reprehensible) than typical mainstream feminism because she believed in the 'justice' of apartheid in South Africa and the superiority of whiteness. Her 'whites only' brand of feminism is what South African Nobel Prize winner for Literature Nadine Gordimer would have referred to with scorn as "piffling feminism" (26), because the movement bickered about a woman's right to enter a bar and did not call for *human* rights and did not oppose *human* injustices (Lazar 101-103; Gordimer 26). Gordimer referred to South African "piffling" feminism as a marginal brand of white feminism where white women were concerned with getting to the top of a capitalist society which incidentally only had space for "white women" (26). As my analysis of her writing indicates, Waring's feminism does appear to fit with this particular capitalist 'stream' of feminism, yet one can also detect elements of all three mainstream feminist arguments in her writing.

Before I proceed with my analysis of Waring's writing, a short paragraph on the ideological perception of women's roles and women's legal, economic and social position in South African society of the 1950s-1980s is necessary. Cherryl Walker writes in her introduction to *Women and Resistance in South Africa*: "Socially, economically, legally – in all spheres of society – women occupy a distinct and subordinate position to men" during the twentieth century. She continues to warn that "[n]owhere do all women share a uniform and unambiguous subordination to all men" (1). Context, time, race, class and other socio-political and socio-economic factors determine

different women's position in a specific society. In South Africa, race and class positions had an impact on women's respective positions and power in society. Although white women did not have as much political and economic power as white men, for example, they had significantly more economic and political power than women and men of colour. For example, white factory workers were paid more from the 1950s onwards than their black counterparts (Berger 192). Walker points out, though, that all South African women did have some things in common during the twentieth century, for example, "women at all levels share[d] the role of reproducers and socialisers of children; their responsibility [was] caring for the family" (2) and that "[i]n both reproductive and productive capacities, women occupy a special sex-typed role which the ideological structures of society – the law, the schools, the media, etc. – have sought to maintain, by promoting women's domestic and supportive roles and reinforcing their subordinate status" (3). Deborah Posel also posits in this regard that the apartheid state was preoccupied with regulatory control over family life, sexuality and gender and considered regulation of these facets of private life as paramount to ensure "white political supremacy and economic prosperity" (334-335). Readers need to remember that "[s]exism in South Africa is far older and more secure than racism […] and pervades all the cultural and ethnic groupings" (Steyn 43). The commonalities between women (at least from the 1930-1950s) ensured that they could foreground class in their unions and not race. Their concerns in the unions were not purely economic but also focused on a variety of women's issues (Berger 191). With this background in mind, I turn to my analysis of Waring's writing on gender issues in her society.

"Not for women": Waring's Critique of Gendered Society and Patriarchy

As an introduction to this section, I relate one perceived scandalous, or even salacious newspaper article Waring wrote for the conservative Afrikaans newspaper, *Die Burger*, in the 1970s. Its publication (as I have no doubt Waring intended) caused consternation from the pews of the church all the way to the office of the then Prime Minister of South Africa, Balthazar Johannes (John) Vorster. This anecdote is followed by a classic Waring diatribe detailing her exasperation concerning women's rights in South Africa. I use these examples from her writing to segue into a broader discussion of Waring's thoughts on gender relations in South Africa.

Waring wrote an article in the 1970s on the subject of the "The lonely woman" (*Hot Air* 17). Lonely women, according to Waring's definition, included divorcees, women who were separated

from their husbands or women who were widows, spinsters, and young, single women. She wrote that "being reasonably young and having all her sexual faculties (unused) and sexual feelings (frustrated), [a woman] should have the right to ring up and ask a man to take her out, and if she and he so wish, to sleep together" (*Hot Air* 17). According to Waring, civil servants and high-ranking members of the Dutch Reformed Church *strongly* objected to her opinion piece and accused her of advocating "freedom of sex for women" (17), and of promoting "adultery" (17). Some members of the church went so far as to send a letter to Prime Minister Vorster to "[p]ass on to Mrs W. please", meaning he had to personally make sure she also received the letter, and pleaded with Vorster to reign in the wife of a cabinet minister for "condoning that women should commit adultery and what this could mean" (17). Apparently, Vorster did pass on the letter to Waring, but refrained from commenting because he possessed a "sardonic sense of humour" (17), at least according to Waring. To avoid any confusion regarding the outrage this article caused, it is necessary to explain at this juncture that *Die Burger* at this point in its publication history did not generally advocate sexual freedom to its rather parochial reading public. What does become clear from the tone Waring employed to relate the above-mentioned 'scandal', is that she thoroughly enjoyed being the subject of public debate. She proclaimed, as a closing statement to the sex-saga: "I was vastly amused" (17). In another extract from *Hot Air*, in one of the three to four-minute radio soundbites she transcribed for textual publication, titled "They kick me – in the teeth", Waring complained:

> Here I am sweating it out at meetings, talking to cynical males and often hostile women on equal rights for South African women, when I would rather be at the cinema. Basic equal rights; that is all! […] Surely South African women must know that their position is far inferior legally to that of women the world over? I realise that from a comfort point of view we (South African females), are the most fortunate and most spoilt of women, but we are living a harem existence. If divorce hits us we haven't any guardianship rights over our children but have to go to court to acquire them. We don't retain our property when we go into marriage unless we get a legal document *before* marriage allowing us to do so. "*Allowing*" mind you – what a cheek! And the last item that really gets under the skin of the working woman is having to combine her income with that of her husband for taxation purposes. (83)

In this particular instance, despite her use of an inclusive "we (South African females)", Waring was clearly commenting on white women's legal, social and economic position in South Africa. In my previous chapter I mentioned that South African white women, up until Unionisation in

1910 and the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, had more legal rights and social capital than many other women internationally. Yet, Waring's discussion of (white) women's inferior legal position, supposedly in the 1970s, indicates that in South Africa, a regression occurred from the mid-nineteenth century to the late twentieth century, so much so that she described women's position as "far inferior legally" in comparison to other (probably Western) countries. The effects of the gendered nature of Afrikaner nationalism on Smit, for example, offered insight into how effective the rhetoric and policy-making of the National Party was. In this chapter readers will encounter a white women's rejection of said gendered discourses and sexist National Party governmental policy.

Important in the extracts are Waring's reference to "equal rights", "property rights in marriage", "guardianship rights" over their children, "taxation", women's right to work and her first anecdote about sexual freedom for women. As mentioned, she made these statements in the 1970s, but some of the legal aspects of these statements were no longer true. In 1953 the Matrimonial Affairs Bill, also referred to "Bertha se Wet" [Bertha's Law] because of the efforts of advocate Bertha Solomon, a member of Parliament for the United Party, to push it through, changed many of these concerns raised by Waring.[179] Women could, after the passing of the Bill, own property and did have guardianship rights over their children. One thus needs to question these claims made by Waring. Did she possibly write this article in the 1950s and then later amend it for radio? Or should readers question the veracity of her statements altogether? Worth mentioning is that she omits referencing Bertha Solomon's advocacy for women's rights as an advocate and as a member of Parliament. In fact, Waring *never* refers to any other South African women or women's groups who advocated for women's rights, which raises questions such as: if she claims to be fighting for women's representation in politics, for women's equal rights and for women's socio-cultural representation, why does she not afford other women space in her autobiographical texts? I return to this later in my analysis.

Regardless of the above, all these concerns raised by Waring about women's rights appear consistent with international second-wave feminist concerns from the global north at least. Yet, when Waring started publishing in the 1950s (*I'm no Lady*), as I later show, her arguments were

[179] A copy of the Act, published in the *Union Gazette Extraordinary* on 28 October 1953, is available online at https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/Act%2037%20of%201953.pdf.

less nuanced and specific. It appears as if her critique of men and gender in South Africa developed and changed over the course of three decades of writing. My interest in Waring's critique of gender relations in South Africa is *not* to identify what kind of feminism she ascribed to, especially since I am not even sure after perusing all her writing whether she *identified* as a feminist (though I sometimes refer to her as one for lack of a better term to use), but to read her published opinions on gender relations within the context of their time. I therefore do not apply any specific feminist lens or theoretical framework to my analysis of Waring's autobiographical texts, even though my reading is of a feminist concern. Instead, I rely on historical information, textual analysis and life writing criticism to discuss Waring's *self-representation* and the disclosure of her *female subjectivity* through her critique of men and patriarchy.

Waring's critique of patriarchy is most notably expressed in a chapter in *I'm no Lady* titled "Some Thoughts on South African Men" (27-31). There are many other instances throughout her autobiographical texts, usually in the form of an anecdote or retelling of events, where Waring critiqued men and patriarchy. She further detailed the regrettable subjugated position of women as caused by a "man-made world" (*Lady* 28), yet, in this specific chapter the topic was centred on men, phallocentrism, and the androcentric construction of South African society. Broadly speaking, Waring complained in an acerbic and sarcastic tone that (white) South African men treated women (wives and girlfriends) as their "property" (29), that they reasoned that women should consider themselves as "thrice blessed" (28) to have been chosen or "mark[ed]" (28) by 'him', that she 'may be' around him when he pursued masculine pursuits such as fishing, so that she could praise the 'big fishes' that he caught and that she was magnanimously allowed to be in his presence when he "slumber[ed]" (28). Also, "[s]he [was] permitted to bear his children and mend his hose. Ah! Fortunate woman that she [was]" (28). She also blamed the state of the world, for example World War II, on men and the "chaos" (29) they caused in society. Furthermore, she equated men's dismissal of women and their general 'faults' to the fact that South African men "[didn't] have to cope – they either yell[ed] for the Native boy or their wives when anything want[ed] doing, and never attempt[ed] to deal with the matter themselves" (30). Moreover, Waring declared that the relegation of women to domestic roles was unfair and unequal, all domestic responsibilities were the domain of the "Mother" (30). Regarding sexual relations, Waring noted that even if a woman was feeling unwell, she had to get into the "mood" (30) when her husband was in a "'lover' mood" (30) because South African men did not realise that "love-making and

conversation [were] two things that need[ed] a setting, an atmosphere. It [took] time to make love properly and it [was] an art" (30). Waring further wrote:

> To-day I feel I would like to get some of these South African males, smug as they are, at the end of my gun.
>
> There is still, among the average South African men (and they are all pretty average!), that feeling that the intelligent woman does not exist, or should I say has no right to exist?
>
> They judge a girl by her looks and her figure – they eye the female, assess her show value as a farmer does a cow, and then they start their selling tactics. If by some frightful freak it turns out that she has a few brains as well as looks, they hastily discount that by never allowing anything to crop up in conversation that might start THE brain, "her" brain, working. (27) […]
>
> We South African women are "property" no less than if we had been bought with lobola. They hate us to do anything more than stay at home, looking after their needs, and of course attending to their interests. […]
>
> It's a man-made world all right and I am quite convinced that in the beginning of time, when they drew up the moral rules and regulations by which we live to-day, there was a South African male present at the conference. (28)

Firstly, readers should keep in mind that this autobiographical text was published in 1956 before the rise of second-wave feminism in Western countries. An intriguing question to ponder is where Waring encountered these debates in South Africa and whether she advocated these positions in isolation. As mentioned, her autobiographical texts never refer to other women activists or women's liberation groups in South Africa or whether she participated in such groups. However, as a politician and journalist she must have been aware of Bertha Solomon's efforts in Parliament, Ruth First's work as a journalist for which she was persecuted, as well as the Garment Workers Union in Transvaal, their activities and their stances on women's issues. Many of Waring's grievances regarding gender relations accord with issues raised by leaders of women's unions such as Johanna Cornelius, Anna Scheepers, Lillian Ngoyi and Ray Alexander. Nevertheless, her perspectives on gender roles and impressions of white South African men are important (in my mind at least), because I have not come across another white woman, part of the establishment of the political elite, who published in popular media or in the kind of autobiographical form written for the general (white) public this kind of public criticisms in South African (literary) history of the late 1950s to 1980s. Nadine Gordimer, Ruth First, Noni Jabavu, Winnie Mandela and other

writers of the period mostly focused on race in their writing (as also discussed earlier), yet Waring specifically focused on women's issues.

There are other reasons Waring's writing on gender issues, however problematic for its exclusion of women of colour, should be examined. Devi Sarinjeive's critique in her review article of Coullie's *The Closest of Strangers* (mentioned in the main introduction of this study) specifically mentions Coullie's omission of Waring's autobiographies and argues that to include previously silenced voices is not an adequate remedy to heal the injustices of the past because it "does not eradicate hegemonic re-presenting and textual conventions" of the time, of which Waring forms part. As mentioned in Chapter One, she further writes in relation to the chosen inclusions and exclusions of Coullie's anthology:

> The multiple displacements and relocations all add up to violations, epistemologically that is. A variation is the absence of certain narratives that threaten to mar the imaginary desired, like Joyce Waring's for instance, which with the exclusion of like-others, creates fault lines in the sanitized story of South African women, especially whites. (105)

Although the opinions Waring expressed about women's position in society were flawed because of their exclusionary nature, it is *necessary* to examine and analyse these public documents to contribute to the scrutiny and dissemination of the available public archive on South African women's life writing concerning this period of South African history. As Sarinjeive pointed out, if the work of women like Waring is not examined, researchers run the risk of "saniti[sing]" the history of South African white women's complicity in oppression, in Waring's case even in relation to her stances on gender.

And finally, with reference to the above extract from Waring's work, Waring's unselfconscious dismissal of any other race as even South African is evident. The phrase "We South African women" undoubtedly refers to white women. Waring seemingly felt so secure in her position as white person in South Africa that to her it seemed only natural that she was speaking about white gender relations and white men and women. Her description of South African males, which imply *only* white South African men, effaces other South African races or even denies their existence. Her offhand mention of "lobola"[180] and the "Native boy" indicates that her ideas of 'feminism'

[180] According to Willem Jacobus Smit "'Lobola' is an isiXhosa term for 'bridewealth'. It also refers to the negotiation process that determines the value and currency of the bridewealth that the groom and his family

only encapsulated and articulated white women's concerns. Nonetheless, my interest in Waring's writing concerning gender relations and women's liberation is focused on how she aligned herself and her own interests within this debate and how her subjectivity was constructed in response to (white) men and patriarchy. I therefore do not continuously evoke the moral flaws in Waring's beliefs.

Waring considered most of her 'unique' or 'eccentric' perspectives from an ontological point of view. She invariably referred her readers back to her upbringing in an unusual household with unusual parents to explain to her public what they might consider as aberrant in a woman. Her being and becoming was notably shaped by her parents' influence. However, she mentioned in the above extract that her father, who was "one of the very greatest believers in feminine ability, show[ed] every now and then that he too [was] just pure male at heart" by chastising his daughters when they caused friction and telling them they were "too educated and [they] should stay at home" (27-28). Her admiration of her father evidently did not prevent her from criticising his occasional sexist stances.

Waring's gender critiques in the above extract generalised the position of white men and women. She used "we" and "us" when referring to women's position in society and the pronouns "they" and "them" to generalise men as a group. Her critique seems to be centred on labour relations, again echoing the concerns of working-class women's unions, as well as on the role of patriarchy, although she does not use the jargon of these discourses. She vehemently resisted the assumption that women's place was located in the domestic sphere and that society frowned upon a woman's pursuit of a professional career. However, she did not mention factory workers and their plight, which leads me to assume that there was a class aspect to her thoughts on women's position in South African society. Furthermore, Waring's chagrin was raised by men's supposed 'possession' of women; she stated that "[w]e might just as well be sold into marriage like slaves" (an analogy which angered African-American feminists who were part of the Second Wave for its misappropriation of the language of racial violence and abolitionist discourses in gender discourses), and that women were expected to "serve [men] adoringly after marriage never

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have to transfer to the family of the intended bride" (8). Traditionally, the currency used to pay for a bride in Xhosa culture was cattle but contemporarily South African Rands can also be used as a substitute in the transfer of money that matches the worth of the cattle (which is still used to work out the bridewealth) in monetary terms (129).

questioning the demanding, never obtruding or being anything more than a soft docile shadow" (29). According to Waring, society and public participation were constructed by men to be "For MEN Only" and the exclusion of women was, as indicated by her tone, patently ridiculous and ill-conceived. Her critique of gender relations, as I will illustrate, intriguingly also caused tension within herself and in her writing and to some extent undermines her more forthright criticism.

Earlier in this chapter I stated that Waring's first autobiography differs in tone, voice, and form from the subsequent two published works. As I will illustrate in this section, her thoughts and opinions regarding women's position in society changed with age. Subjectivity is in flux and evolves as a subject accrues experiences: Waring's tone of voice from the first to last autobiographical texts grew more self-assured, her "I" became more agentive. The first chapter in *I'm no Lady* (1956) is cheekily titled "A Contrary Woman" (1-2). In this chapter Waring explained the genesis of the book. In her witty style, she recalled how boredom became the driving force for self-expression in her writing once her children left home for boarding school or university and while Frank was attending parliament in Cape Town. The process is recalled as follows:

> First a few articles for the *Outspan* on Parliament and parliamentary life. Then on other topics and now gradually I have expanded this into a book, a light book, of little value except for laughs, but to me the thing that kept me from going over the edge at time.
>
> Please don't take it seriously. Don't, as some readers of my articles have done, write and tell me what a monster I must be and how sorry you are for Frank – he doesn't mind at all. In fact he is behind a great many of my stories.
>
> It's all in the game – this leg-pulling. Without it life could be grim indeed, especially for a M.P. and his restless wife. (2)

Firstly, although her writing here seems to convey a level of self-effacement because she referred to it as "light", "of little value" and for "laughs", it is a mistake to assume from the above that her writing is always self-effacing or without serious reflection. She emerges in her first autobiographical text as self-conscious, and she constantly tried to explain herself to the public. Her negotiation here between the private and public might have triggered her insecurity and her attempt at calming her audience, some of whom referred to her as a "monster", apparently because she did not conform to what a 'wife' was supposed to be. However, as I later show, her subsequent two autobiographical texts reflect the opposite of an insecure woman and contain a markedly self-assured female voice.

To further elucidate the nature of her voice in the first autobiographical text and her trouble negotiating her private opinions on gender within a public space, I refer to the second chapter of *Lady*, titled "I'm *NOT* the Boss" (3-8). The next extract from this chapter conveys the author's anxiety to be regarded as feminine even though she was a 'difficult' and 'contrary' woman, as she described herself. The following excerpt contains Waring's response to a story her husband loved to tell about the "cookboy", Andries, who referred to Joyce, not Frank, as the "boss" (3) of the house:

> When a man tells a story like that about his wife then there is nothing she can tell about him that even begins to compare, since for any "feminine" woman to be told even playfully "You're the boss" is enough to send her straight into the air – and I am feminine enough to take off every time he tells it.
>
> I have every reason in the world to be different. I was born without benefit of a doctor, I was raised to be a professional woman, I, the wrong 'un, married a "nice man", my children think I'm a joke, the political public think I'm an eccentric, my friends think I'm for laughs, and I sometimes wonder about myself – a sure sign something is wrong.
>
> But I'm *not the Boss*.
>
> I'm a trifle off the beam on politics, a little deranged on the subject of my family, a trifle hasty in my temper, but – so obviously to anyone with sense to read this Waring chronicle – I am the butt of all the stories told in this book, and to be pitied. Poor Joyce! But I'm *not* the Boss! […]
>
> All my life I've done what I didn't oughter, and Frank hasn't seemed to mind; in fact, he has often egged me on – and this gives the unthinking and simple-minded to believe I crack the whip. How wrong they are. He has got me on the end of a string just like one of these rubber toys that you jiggle around but when you jerk it comes straight back to your hand.
>
> Me – I'm the toy. I love to jiggle and be jiggled, but oh! how I love to be brought back to hand and chastised *** the right way. [*sic*]
>
> I'm feminine. I need a Boss and I have several! My husband, my children, my dogs and my tenants – not to mention Parliament itself." (*I'm no Lady* 3-4)

As is evident from the extract, Waring, for all her textual grandstanding and combative attitude expressed towards her society, was in fact sensitive to the public's opinion of her and her writing and appears to have partially internalised public opinion towards women. In this extract, the narrator textually attempted to use her "femininity" or womanhood as a kind of bargaining tool to combat public perception of her as a "monster" (2) woman or as the "boss". This is not unique to

Waring as author, as Gilbert and Gubar (in *Madwoman in the Attic*) and many other scholars have indicated (I have examined the precarious and potentially dangerous internalisation by women of public opinion towards women in my previous chapters). The fear of being labelled a 'monster woman' or considered grotesque was pervasive in the writing of nineteenth and twentieth-century woman authors, and pertaining to this thesis, is also evident in Molteno, Smit and Waring, although they manifested these 'symptoms' of internalisation of their supposedly 'inferior' positions or deviant subjectivities in diverging ways. Waring the protagonist, as shown in the extract above, is fearful of being called 'bossy' and considered unfeminine. Waring the writer assailed these fears by employing interesting writing strategies. The narrator used diminutives to describe herself and utilised humour as strategy, although it appears that the protagonist did not consider these critiques levelled by society at all funny. In fact, the undertone of the anecdote is one of restrained anger, yet she attempted to relay her defence of herself in a jocular tone that is intended to be read as self-effacing. *I'm no Lady*'s narrating "I" frequently refers to Frank relationally, to lend authenticity and authority to her acts and opinions.

Waring further employed illustrations/cartoons such as figure 23 where Waring is sketched as defeated within a gendered setting. The expression on her face is one of resignation, irritation and weariness, she is sitting instead of packing and there is chaos all around. Although Waring herself did not draw these cartoons, they were successfully employed as self-representative tools in her narration.

The cartoon portrays Waring's domestic nightmares of having to camp for six months of the year at Glencairn while Parliament was in session. With Frank at Parliament, Waring was left with the headache of packing and unpacking the family's possessions. These visual cues of domesticity and gendered labour, I contend, are no accident but a clever author's strategy to soothe potential critical readers. The cartoon, in relation to the text, seems to say: *look* at me, I'm a woman too and I also busy myself with domestic tasks while the men are away at work. I too have a Boss!

Figure 24 "Who really likes to pack up a home from time to time?"

In the extract above she employed diminutive phases to describe some of her negative characteristics. She stated that she was "a *trifle off the beam* on politics, a *little deranged* on the subject of [her] family, *a trifle hasty* in [her] temper" (my emphasis) and "the butt of *all* the stories told in this book, and to be pitied. Poor Joyce" and then assertively stated: "But I'm *not* the Boss". Her tone and use of diminutives in this instance indicate her awareness of opinions expressed by the public about her person and character and her attempt to address these allegations without annoying her reading public. It appears that the narrator admitted to perceived 'faults' in her character, using diminutive phrasing to both assuage the public but also to lessen the extent of 'faults' that are confessed to. The author seemed willing to concede that she did come across as too garrulous and abrasive (as a woman) and to some extent appears to have internalised these critiques of society, yet she contests being thought of as the 'boss' in a patriarchal society. Even though she attempted to challenge patriarchy, her subjectivity was seemingly informed by discourses in society that alleged that she had emasculated her husband and 'ruled' him. Public opinion then seemed to cause deep consternation for the protagonist despite her 'feminist'

convictions and it further appears she tried to negate these 'allegations' which, in effect, sabotages her attempt to present herself as independent, feminist woman. In his discussion of how power functions in society, Foucault writes:

> In short this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege', acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions – an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated. Furthermore, this power is not exercised simply as an obligation or a prohibition on those who 'do not have it'; it invests them, is transmitted by them and through them; it exerts pressure upon them, just as they themselves, in their struggle against it, resist the grip it has on them. (26-27)

With reference to Waring's attempts to "resist the grip" of patriarchy, one could say the power of the "exert[ed] "pressure" on her and "invest[ted]" in her: she internalised aspects of patriarchal discourse on women and "exercised" these discourses herself.

Another writing strategy Waring employed was to become the "butt of all the stories" in the autobiographical texts and to highlight her husband's support of her. Waring stated later in her life that Frank was "broadminded enough to accept that [she] was also entitled to a mind and voice of [her] own, even if 'only a woman'" (*Hot Air* 17). To some extent, the humour employed to convey her life narratives and the criticism of society contained within the narratives appear to function as mode to efface the "I" relating these anecdotes. Yet, I propose that although it comes across to readers as though she was self-effacing in her narration with the use of self-deprecating humour, it was simply a clever writing strategy she employed to critique society, with the effect that she did not become "the butt of all the stories" in her life narratives. Waring herself categorised her books as "politico-humorous" (*Hot Air* 15), indicating that she consciously intersected political critique with a humorous tone. She was even criticised by members of the public that her written work lacked "depth" as a result of her "tongue in cheek style" (*Hot Air* 91). It is most probably a technique she felt compelled to employ to make women's critique of political and social society more palatable to readers, a point I return to in the following section.

Waring, in the extract above, intriguingly equated femininity to subservience when she stated that she was "feminine" and therefore "need[ed] a boss" and had "several". This statement expressed the opposite of the previous extract I examined where she critiqued gendered society and patriarchy. The concept of femininity in South African society during the 1950s was mostly associated with subservience, compliance, tractability, malleability, and servility and was

performed by acceding to these traits and to physically 'act' with perceived feminine grace and mannerisms. Waring's writing reveals that she was cognisant of the fact that women who were angry, outspoken and dissatisfied with the status quo of women's position were somehow cast as unfeminine and did not want to be perceived as such. This then explains her attempts to negotiate an identity in this particular extract where she can be both "a trifle deranged" on the subject of politics and women's issues, and yet be perceived as feminine. The tone of her narration conveys the impression that she desired to conceptualise and sell the idea to the public of a feminine feminist woman. However, what exactly the author meant or tried to imply with her use of "feminine" remains unclear. The following extract further elucidates her struggle to be regarded as feminine and what she meant by the concept. It also illuminates her struggles to be taken seriously as female politician and political journalist:

> As for me – I'm no lady. Ever since I got into the political game they keep saying it's "Not for Women".
>
> That's what they keep telling me when I say I am going into politics seriously. "My dear," in solemn hushed voices, "don't do that. It's so unfeminine." But that's not true. It's my very femininity that gives an edge to my political feelings.
>
> If you are a fighting gel like me, you haven't a chance in this world of cavemen and fluttering females. No matter how really feminine you are, you will always be told that a woman in politics becomes so hard and masculine. I say that's quite unnecessary. I'm a very feminine woman. I dress to look as attractive as I know how; I love to be flattered about my clothes and my appearance, I'm as ready as the next female to swoon if the man is charming enough, and I can scratch like a tiger cat if anybody poaches on my preserve. But does that mean my brain and blood must atrophy? Does it mean that I am less able to make a speech, to harangue a heckling audience or to stand on a soap box? Never!" (*I'm no Lady* 81)

Indeed, Waring seems to be preoccupied throughout her autobiographical texts with maintaining her slim and fit physique (*Lady* 109-117; *Sticks* 241-266) and she clearly adored shoes, hats and clothes (*Lady* 111).[181] As stated in the extract, Waring wanted to look attractive and enjoyed being admired for her appearance. Apparently, she equated physical beauty and 'female grace', poise and refinement with being "feminine". One could say that Waring was under the impression that

[181] She also enjoyed driving around in grand Cadillacs, living in beautiful houses and throwing expensive, well-organised parties (*Sticks* 101-108; 209-225), all perks of being a minister's wife, signalling her socio-economic and cultural privilege.

the public of the time thought that physical beauty and femininity were impossible to maintain if one were a politician, activist or even intelligent. She asked a fair question: "does [femininity] mean my brain and blood must atrophy? Does it mean that I am less able to make a speech, to harangue a heckling audience or to stand on a soap box?"

Figure 25 "I was almost jerked off the Lorry …"

In figure 25 Waring is illustrated as powerful and angry, a "fighting gel" among the "fluttering females", to use her description, fighting off a man trying to pull her from a lorry during one of her political campaigns. The protagonist is always illustrated as a cartoonish caricature finding herself in a precarious position, and thus not as beautiful (see figures 21 and 23), yet in this illustration she is drawn as fierce. The visual representation of her political activities translates her writing for the I/eye: it portrays the "Never!" Waring wrote in answer to her own questions. Yet, she noticeably referred to the white middle-class "fluttering females" of the time. In 1956, the year in which *I'm no Lady* appeared in print, South African women of all races, ages and ethnicities

came together in the largest women's protest in South African history, the anti-pass women's march (organised by the FSAW). And before then, working-class women (of all race groups) in unions battled it out with policemen to ensure fair play from their employers. Waring's writing, in all three autobiographical texts, remains quiet about black and white women's anti-apartheid activism and union activities, which were clearly political.[182] These women harangued and heckled police, not audiences, like Waring. Take figures 20 and 25 for example. While she was canvassing as a candidate for the United Party she described the audience as follows: "Another meeting we held at a nasty little place where obviously apartheid had never been applied. Our audience consisted of tarts, bullies and children in pyjamas – and the worst of all were the children. Never in my life have I heard such language" (86). Readers should note that these so-called "tarts, bullies and children in pyjamas" were staunch Nationalist Party supporters and Waring eventually joined their ranks. One cannot help but ponder the statement: "a nasty little place where obviously apartheid had never been applied". What did she imply with this statement? That the community was mixed because it was poor or that the welfare endeavours of the apartheid state had had no effect in this 'nasty' community?

Waring appears to have changed the opinions on femininity she expressed in the 1950s. She first, in a five-minute soundbite for radio and then transcribed for print in *Hot Air*, maintained in the 1970s that "it is the women who like men, the sexy, attractive, clever women, not the thick, hairy legged Women's Liberation types, who make the top" (29). This statement exemplifies the protagonist's fear of being considered unattractive, and further indicates her own bias against women she (unfairly) considered as the stereotypical "hairy legged Women's Liberation types". The comment "make it to the top" indicates Waring's understanding of feminism and women's rights as something that could afford *her* and other women of her class the opportunity to become professional women, reaching the highest echelons of a patriarchal and capitalist society. Waring's embodied subjectivity also comes to the fore through her narrator's statements. It highlights a very important tension in her writing. Firstly, her body marked her in her society as inferior and excluded her from aspects of public and political spheres. As she angrily retorted: "You have to

[182] Waring omitted to mention in her autobiographical texts that she had in fact wanted to be a Member of Parliament and stood as UP candidate against Helen Suzman in 1952 for the Houghton seat, but lost. She did however mention Suzman briefly in *Hot Air* and even admitted that she was "very able and talented" (29), but failed to discuss Suzman's anti-apartheid activism or her progressive politics.

be damn good in every way as a woman, to make it, while if you are a man, that is all the qualification you need" (*Hot Air* 29). The difference between a man and a woman in Waring's era of writing was their sexed body, and it meant the difference, according to her, between privilege and oppression, access and exclusion. Yet, one needs to remember that Waring was also privileged in her class and socio-economic position. Secondly, although the narrating "I" of Waring's autobiographical texts voiced an angry rejoinder to the gendered division of society based on biological difference, the desire *to be* desirable physically seemed to form an integral part of the protagonists' subjectivity. Discourses around femininity in her society thus had an impact on the formation of her subjectivity. One could argue that Waring internalised the apparent need for physical beauty as a feminine requirement to success, according to patriarchal standards, and worked to maintain her beauty. Lastly, her critique of the gendered divisions in her society, relating to inclusions and exclusion based on biological bodies, was, in retrospect, not very successful. She failed to consider the larger power structures of her society, which was inherently built on the inclusion of whites and the exclusion of non-whites (also marked by the skin of *bodies*). Furthermore, she did not consider the class divisions of white society and seemingly only wanted to make it to the "top" of a capitalist society. Foucault writes about the relationship between power, politics and the body:

> But the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs. This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. (25-26)

Waring's body was "mark[ed]" as biological woman, which meant, according to white patriarchal society of the time, its "political use" was mostly supposed to be domestic "labour" and for its reproductive capabilities. Dominant discourse of the time tried to "subject[…]" woman's bodies to gendered labour participation to remain "useful" and "productive". Waring chafed against the "hold" politics had on her body, but simultaneously invested in these discourses by almost "train[ing]" it to "emit signs" of femininity to be considered 'productive'.

As I have mentioned, Waring's critiques of men and gender relations in South Africa appeared to have caused some consternation, at least with the publication of *I'm no Lady*. Although she frequently refers relationally to Frank in *Lady* to lend authority to her statements or to defend her actions (which the narrator claimed he always approved of), from her tone I think that the necessity of using her husband as defence irritated her. Twenty years later, after she became a columnist for *Die Vaderland*, she wrote in her first column by way of introduction:

> In this, my new column, I intend pulling no punches. The time has come for the public to forget I am the wife of a Cabinet Minister. A Supreme Court judgment has said that Mrs Waring is a public and political personality in her own right and this is how it is and should be. What I say and write is because I am Joyce Waring, Nationalist, South African, a person in her own right. I intend to be true to myself and my convictions. I am prepared to face the consequences and not hide behind my husband. (*Hot Air* 16)

Her statement that she was "prepared to face the consequences and not hide behind [her] husband" invites scrutiny. As a reader, I was never under the impression that she ever hid behind her husband. It appears she felt she *had* to bring him into the narrative to explain to readers who might disapprove of a wife acting as she did that her husband did not disapprove. Theirs was a marriage of equals; at least, it is portrayed as such by the narrator. However, twenty years after the publication of *Lady* Waring came across as fed up with having to justify her actions and words relationally through her husband and asserted her independence as "public and political personality in her own right". The entire tone and style of writing in *Hot Air* is more assertive than it was in *Lady*. As politician, Waring had to contend not only with her public image as wife, but also as mother. As mentioned, the couple had three children, Adrienne, Francis and Michael. Waring seems more at ease in her writing to combine motherhood with the political realm than to merge wifehood with political life. Marriage as hindrance in politics appears to be a trend in South Africa. Two union members, Tembi Nabe and Lydia Kompe, said that marriage prevented women from participating in public and political life. Kompe, the branch secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union said in 1983, while addressing a group of women: "I am married, but for the sake of the struggle I wish I wasn't. It stood in my way. Maybe marriage stands in the way of liberation" (Berger 186). Without any apparent difficulty in her writing, Waring portrays herself as a good mother, but not a doting one. In fact, when writing about her private life with her children, she generally teased them and could be rather scathing in writing about them (*Sticks* 122-130; *Lady* 124-146; *Sticks* 96-100). The image she mostly portrays of her children is not too flattering; she

does not appear uncomfortable when writing disparaging anecdotes about them. Cherryl Walker examines motherhood in the history of South Africa and states that, for women, "motherhood [lay] at the core of women's identity, shaping their political choices" ("Conseptualising Motherhood" 418). Nonetheless, in her writing Waring clearly did not define her self, her identity and her political choices in relation to motherhood and the perceptions thereof; rather, she portrayed herself in terms of being a politician. In stark contrast though, her marriage, although by her admission a happy and equal one, appears to have constantly caused tension in her narration. She frequently mentioned in her three autobiographical texts that her husband did not "mind" (*Lady* 2) her personality or writing, that he encouraged her writing of provocative articles (*Lady* 3-4), that he was an exception to the men she criticised. This signals that, in terms of wifehood, she felt she had to defend herself, her actions and her writing against public opinion that she was a bad wife. From her writing it emerges that the public never accused her of being a bad mother, despite the disparaging anecdotes she wrote about her children, but that they did express sympathy for her husband and thought she was a "monster" for her public *expressions*, not her behaviour towards him, possibly because she did not conform to how a *wife* was supposed to act.

Through a discussion of politics and gender relations, Waring managed to (re)present her protagonist as intelligent, feisty, assertive, thoughtful, informed, witty, catty and critical. However, read retrospectively, this portrayal is undermined by her failure to address larger power structures in her society and the concomitant failure to address other forms of oppression, such as working-class white women's position in society, and the absence of legal, economic, political and social representation of non-white South African citizens. This failure was partly due to becoming "investe[d]" in the dominant power structures herself and then "transmit[ting]" (Foucault 2) these structures in her texts. Her "I" manages through her narration to colour and dress itself in various garbs: politician, wife, mother, journalist, woman, daughter and commentator. However, Waring's narration is not unselfconscious. The author used various writing techniques as a counterweight to her more unpopular opinions, especially relating to her criticism of men and the skewed gender relations of the time. She sometimes relationally referred to her husband as a defence, she utilised an artist's illustrations of her as a caricature, she relied on self-deprecating humour and she quoted from various other newspapers as evidence of her statements. The old adage of second-wave feminism that the personal is political (Thompson 346) is observable in Waring's self-representation. Gordimer's accusation that middle-class feminism in South Africa was "piffling"

can be applied to Waring's brand of "whites only" 'feminism'. Her interest in gender relations appears to be personal, almost selfish. Her concern extended to women from the same class as hers who suffered the ills of patriarchy and who were legally and economically less powerful than men. Her fight for equality is mostly about *herself* (as was the case with many second-wave feminist groups) and about her being denied participation. Waring's subjectivity was significantly formed in opposition to the discriminatory gendered relations of her patriarchal society. Through her writing and from her privileged socio-economic position, which afforded her a voice and access to media outlets, she attempted to attack the discrimination she perceived. But, her subjectivity also evolved in accordance with dominant discourses on womanhood, and she internalised beliefs that women had to be feminine and attractive to be successful. However problematic Waring's writing on gender is, her voice is still important as part of the construction of an archive of women's life writing of the period. She represents a particular kind of middle-class feminism in South Africa about which not much has been written, possibly with good reason.

Whiteness and Waring

Following the methodology used in the previous section, I introduce this discussion of Waring's political and personal writing about race with two examples from her texts. A general norm in Waring's writing is that whenever she referred to 'people' (for example South Africans, women, men, politicians, citizens, etc.), the reference was to white people. It appears from her writing as though it never occurred to her to that people of other races were also South African men or women, which, according to Steyn (qtd. in Knoetze 22), is a feature of whiteness. Knoetze explains in relation to the aim of critical whiteness studies that this theoretical approach can be:

> a possible tool in changing the subjectivities which lie at the heart of white ignorance, an ignorance defined by Steyn […] as 'learning what not to know' and 'what not to notice'. According to her, '[f]or dominant groups especially, it is not as much about accuracy as about how they would like the world to be, and having the power and resources to impose their desires, drives and will upon the social field and to effect social control, that is, to institute an ignorance contract'. (Knoetze 22)

As my analysis illustrates, Waring subscribed to such an "ignorance contract", exemplified by the fact that she (maybe even unconsciously) assumed, probably correctly, that her reading audience would *know* that she was referring to 'whites only' when discussing people or the political issues of her day. Whenever she *did* refer to other races or race groups in South Africa (which did not

happen regularly) she seemingly made a conscious effort to *name* them to explain who she was referring to, whereas whites did not require naming. However, she regularly distinguished between Afrikaans-speaking and English-speaking white South Africans. Considering the white ethnic tensions still prevalent at the time of Waring's writing (following in the wake of the Anglo-Boer War), the necessity of distinguishing between groups is understandable. To illustrate my point about her "ignorance" and what she learned not to "notice", what follows is one very obvious example of many in which Waring (un)consciously referred to humans as 'white'. After Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd's murder in Parliament by Dimetrio Tsafendas, Waring wrote an inflammatory article for the *Cape Times* in which she accused the "press, the clergy and the opposition of being responsible for creating the atmosphere that could and did lead to Dr Verwoerd's murder" (*Sticks* 276). It caused a furore in the press, among the public and within parliament. Waring had to face down a Select Committee of Parliament who accused her of breaching privilege because Frank was a Minister (*Sticks* 268-314). Needless to say, Waring's article and the consequent Parliamentary hearing caused a sensation in the press and made Waring even more visible to the public than before. She wrote the following in response to people who frequently changed their mind and adjusted their political opinions, especially in the wake of Verwoerd's murder:

> Forgive me if I say truthfully that some members of the Human Race sicken me! I can respect a man who has opinions, if they differ from mine, but I cannot bear the sycophants one meets in politics and I get a frozen smile on my face when I meet them that bodes ill for them, if for one minute they would stop their fawning and take note of my attitude. But they never do! Their skins have grown too tough to worry about a small snub. (*Stones* 296)

Taking the context of Waring's statement into account, her reference to the "Human Race", written with capital letters, includes only white people in its definition. One could almost replace the 'human' with 'white', which would be a more accurate description of who Waring was relationally referring to. My thoughts concerning Waring's reference to 'humans' or 'people' as the white race is that these textual slips or references were unconscious. With reference to other scholars' work in the field of critical whiteness studies in South Africa (which I discuss throughout), it is possible to say here that the nature of whiteness during the 1950-1980s and its cultural hegemony as well as Waring's support of the segregating and racist policies of the National Party influenced her to the point that she perceived whiteness as *normative* and 'naturally human' and therefore did not

consider differentiating between 'humans', remaining blind to the diverse enormity of the category. Waring's unconscious use of the descriptive 'human race' for 'whites only' illustrates the pervasive discriminatory and exclusive effects whiteness had during apartheid (and arguably still has, globally). Sarinjeive extrapolates on this phenomenon of whites' 'blindness' to others and itself, by referencing Dreama Moon: "She demystifies how whiteness works as a system of *domination by evasion*, that is *blindness* to issues of race, and solipsism, that is seeing the world as 'white space', and the *normative universal* instead of 'positioned and particular'" (my emphasis 106). Clearly, the dominant "normative universal" of a supposed white "Human Race" is a general feature at play in Waring's writing.

The next extract illuminates the type of colonial/apartheid discourse and specific tone Waring employed to write about race and is identifiable in this anecdote from *I'm no Lady*. In one of the few instances in Waring's life narratives where she mentions other races, she recalls the story of her and her three children, her sister Mollie and Mollie's two children who were driving through Pondoland, a region in the Eastern Cape inhabited mainly by the Pondo Xhosa clan. The narrator relates that they lost their way and their car broke down while they were driving up a remote mountain pass, proceeding to make the following claims:

> Now Pondoland is a lovely country if you have time to look at it, but it has a strange people living in it. The Pondos are not like other Natives; they are a fey people, unfriendly. Their men dress themselves up like women in earrings and head-doeks, and one and all, from baby to grandpa, they carry a stick to kill the snakes. And they have other irritating habits – they stare. There isn't a Pondo in sight when you stop – and suddenly there are dozens, all staring and none offering help. And so it was here. They materialised out of the bushes and from behind rocks. The sky clouding over, rain and mist (ever present in Pondoland) were imminent, and the Natives just stared. They looked grim too! We were scared. After all, there were only two males with us and they were twelve and six and not likely to be any great help. Thoughts of the Mau Mau were not far away. (*I'm no Lady* 56-57)

The narrating "I" in this instance speaks as an authority on the subject of Pondos but the effect is that the narrated "I" appears woefully ignorant of other races, ethnicities, clans, cultural diversity, only displaying its own subjectivity and racial bias. The narrated "I" (contemporarily at least) comes across as an ignoramus making the kind of ethnographic observations a colonial traveller would have made. In effect, the narrating "I" is not detailing its ethnographic knowledge, but is rather displaying the narrated "I"s subjectivity for the audience. So, what do readers learn about

Waring's subjectivity from this extract? Firstly, Waring feared black people, or was "scared" of them. Secondly, despite her various criticisms of men and patriarchy she still depended on white men to protect her from black men. Why else would she mention the "two [young] males" who were not "likely to be any great help". Thirdly, she was prejudiced against black people. She disliked, in this case, their apparent habit of "staring" and thought them unhelpful, without explicitly asking for their assistance. Her observations, although part of the dominant discourse of the 1950s and in line with the rhetoric of the National Party about the "swart gevaar" [black danger], exemplify Waring's own fear of the Other. Waring's narrative mentions that the Pondos are a "fey people", "unfriendly", "grim", not like "other Natives", which she fails to define or mention. The implication of this statement is that she considered, or at least experienced 'Natives', a term left unexplained, as friendly and kind. This stereotype of the friendly 'Natives' recalls the stereotype of the 'noble savage' from colonial history. Thus, it appears that when black people were not acting friendly toward her, Waring feared they would rebel like the "Mau Mau"[183] and kill her or want sexual relations. Considering the numerous incidents she relates where white people were viciously angry with her, she never expressed the thought that they might harm her. The only possible conclusion is that her fear of bodily harm was racialised.

In this section, I use critical whiteness studies to critique Waring's political writings. Readers should take into account that "[t]he point of looking at whiteness is to dislodge it from its centrality and authority, not to reinstate it" (Dyre qtd. in West and Schmidt 9). South African writer and literary-cultural critic Zoë Wicomb summarises "[c]ontemporary theories about whiteness". She writes: "white is an empty signifier, both everything and nothing, that being invisible to itself it cannot acknowledge its existence, that it can only articulate itself in terms of the markedness of black, the contrast which supplies the meaning of white as the norm" (371). Writer and academic Njabulo Ndebele, however, regards whiteness as more complex than "empty" or "invisible to itself". In an interview with Mary West he ponders the multiplicity of contemporary un-voiced white subjectivities: "It occurred to me that, in fact, there is a multiplicity of 'whitenesses' which we don't understand because these differences have all been papered over by the official whiteness of apartheid, in the same way that apartheid papered over everyone who was black" (117).

[183] The Mau Mau uprising happened in Kenya from 1952-1956. The rebellion was a "reaction to inequalities and injustices in British-controlled Kenya" (*South African History Online* 2018) and some white settlers were killed during the uprising, which possibly explains Waring's reference to the Mau Mau in this context.

Irrespective of varying theories and definitions of whiteness, my interest in whiteness in this chapter is to illustrate *how* it manifests in Waring's subjectivity and how it was translated through her writing.

As I indicated in the introduction to this chapter, the paratextual information, the cover images, and other visual content of Waring's texts symbolically suggest much about content, style, and form to the reader; these features foreground an expectancy of a particular identity construction. In my discussion of Waring and her female emancipation agenda, I argued that she included cartoon illustrations to temper the chagrin she raised in her readers. With the aid of such pictorials (to underscore her satirical tone), she strategically fashions herself into a seemingly harmless comical figure, farcical even, to launch complaints about (white) women's rights. Given her blatant racist commentary in writing (possibly intended to entertain), I found myself contemplating why Waring did not employ similar visual strategies to propagate her support of apartheid policies? (See, for example, figures 20, 21 and 24 – they have nothing to do with racial issues). Could it be that she assumed her reading public would agree with her racist opinions? I hypothesise that this might be the case: I propose that Waring perhaps saw no need to turn *her* into the caricature, as was a necessary strategy when she discussed gender issues. The 'other' in the instances where she writes about race, one could argue, is the textual caricature used to offset whiteness as the norm (with reference to Wicomb's work here (371)). This scenario seems to suggest that she felt no need to justify her opinions regarding race with innovative rhetorical strategies in the same way that she presented her identity to voice views about white women's disempowerment in South Africa. Additionally, she used sarcasm, or even ridicule, rather than humour to comment on race relations in South Africa. Wit, as writing strategy, was only employed when she intended to counterbalance her unpopular gender criticism.

Waring's autobiographical texts unapologetically express racist sentiments. The narrator of the texts did not question discriminatory racial policies such as the pass laws, Bantu education or the lack of black enfranchisement implemented during apartheid by the National Party, of which she later became a member. Questions about the morality of her beliefs are left unasked in the narrative processes of fashioning her protagonist, almost as if scripting *her* political opinions were adequate justification of its merits. For example, Waring's husband Frank was asked to leave the United Party because he opposed the amendments to their "colour policy". The amendments they

proposed to make were to repeal the Immorality Act (prohibiting interracial marriage unions) and they further suggested changes to the "legislation" (46) that denied non-white citizens the right to vote. However, the UP suggested that the right to vote would only extend to individuals who could pass the "civilisation test" (*Stones* 47) and who were 'educated'. In support of the actions her husband took while still a member of the UP, she dedicated almost 30 pages in *Sticks and Stones* (41-69), to clarify any 'misinformation' about the events surrounding Frank's dismissal. She fiercely defended his actions and stated as justification of his opposition to the above amendments the UP wanted to make about racially discriminating laws: "We knew to survive in this country we had to take a strong line on the colour question" (*Stones* 60). Firstly, although she mentioned the "colour question", she omitted to reference in these 30 pages any non-whites, opting to centre her discussion on the actions of white politicians and political parties. Secondly, the "strong line" the narrator mentioned in relation to the "colour question" echoes the earlier discussed "fear" to "survive in this country" as a white. Sarinjeive asserts that "[t]he realities of white supremacy are, simultaneously, blocked by stratagems of non-verbalisations or euphemisms or hyperpoliteness, all intrinsic to erasing and masking continuing racism in coded ways" (106). In light of the above, Waring also employed a "stratagem[…] of non-verbalisation[…] or euphemism[…]": she textually used a kind of euphemism, the phrase "colour question", without mentioning anti-apartheid activities or black people as a group, as though racial injustice was a problem politicians could solve while pondering it as a "question". Furthermore, she claimed "we" (read: white politicians) needed to "take a strong line" on said "colour question" without verbalising either the plight of the disenfranchised non-white groups or the contemptible methods government employed to subjugate other racial groups. In comparison to Molteno's publicly expressed disapproval of racial discrimination and Smit's textual silence on racial matters, Waring's written advocacy of white superiority, fear of the Other, appears as indictment of how her racial subjectivity was produced by the hegemonic discourse of the time.

As wife to a government minister, daughter of a politician and political journalist and as 'politician in her own right' (declared thus by the Judge in the case of the Parliamentary Select Committee), it seems only natural that Waring provided her own political views in the process of textual self-representation. These political opinions about the so-called "colour question" were somehow textually provided while completely overlooking (or maybe consciously omitting), the politics of black opposition parties and their actions during apartheid, which happened in the time of her

writing. To extrapolate further, Waring rarely mentions individual black or Coloured people; her vitriol is usually aimed at parliamentary opposition parties and members of more progressive parties (*Stones* 279-280; *Stones* 86; *Stones* 191; *Stones* 51). Her anger and disdain, for example, is mostly expressed for white supporters of black liberation and not for black people per se or as a group. It emerges if one reads critically as if non-whites were not even worth her anger or mention; hence, beneath her notice. There are, as always, exceptions to the norm, and I discuss an incident further on in which she did mention a black man individually. As mentioned above, in *Sticks and Stones* Waring spent considerable time defending Frank's actions which led to his decision to leave (or at least was asked to leave) the UP. She wrote:

> Frank was most dissatisfied with the liberal line the U.P. was taking. They had thrown overboard Smuts's and Hertzog's Conservative right-wing policy, and were putting out pamphlets and manifestos advocating representation of Blacks by Blacks in Parliament, and integration as a future policy. (45)

Frank Waring left the UP in 1953. In 1952 the Defiance Campaign was launched by the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid groups across the country in response to, among others, discriminatory laws, the removal of Coloureds from the voters list, the requirement of black workers to travel with pass books, and the restriction of movement of non-whites that prohibited them from entering whites-only areas, etc. ("Defiance Campaign" *South African History Online* 2018). As acts of civil disobedience, participants protesting the government burned their pass books, did not go to work and entered whites-only areas. Yet, Waring's failure to reference these events signals an almost wilful "blindness", an effort of learning what "not to see", as discussed earlier. In the extract above, readers can see that her concern was with the actions taken in parliament by white political parties, as it always was. If the UP started advocating for "representation of Blacks by Blacks in Parliament", one would expect a political journalist to at least explain why the Party was changing its mandate, which she did not. One could thus argue that Waring's journalism reflected a kind of whiteness that was 'transparent' or non-existent as a "category" (Wicomb 371). Wicomb writes that whiteness with "[i]ts avowed transparency, its refusal to acknowledge itself as an examinable category at the same time asserts the unthinkability of itself as object or other" (371). Waring's writing, throughout all three autobiographical texts, is suggestive of her political ideology, which viewed whiteness as normative, and as unexaminable. Her lack of self-reflection concerning racial politics in South Africa, her assumed superiority as white person that did not require critical engagement about her own position, reflects the zeitgeist

of white South Africa. Her subjectivity, as read through her political writing, reflects a subject produced in accordance with dominant white discourse of the 1950-1980s in South Africa. Her whiteness was never subjected to examination, never discussed, never defined.

As I have said previously, it emerges through my analysis of Waring's writing that she seemingly revelled in publicly criticising others, but she rarely expressed self-doubt, indicating a lack of self-reflection in her textual construction of her protagonist's subjectivity. To me, the tone of the narratives conveys in its use of ridicule that she would have easily disparaged and dismissed opposing opinions. For example, in a chapter of *Sticks and Stones* Waring detailed certain newspapers' and journalists' change of heart over time concerning Frank and Joyce Waring's politics. The irony that she did not question her and Frank's own changeability, in this instance, about their switch of allegiance to the National Party, was lost on her; yet this changeability is the very thing she was accusing other newspapers and journalists of. Waring wrote:

> Unfortunately, certain journalists, frustrated by the ineffectiveness of their own political parties, the U.P. and the Progressives, are becoming increasingly bitter and twisted. Bitter, because their everlasting attacks on the Nationalists always peter out in complete fiasco since they are based on fiction, and twisted, because it is most maddening to one's ego to be always wrong in your prognosis. (*Sticks* 191)

The above statement was also made in reference to Frank's refusal to support the UP's attempts to keep the Coloured representatives in Parliament, and then jumping ship to join the Nationalist's ranks. Once again, what readers come across in her narration is Waring's irritation with other political parties (but not the NP) and the media. She made no further mention of other race groups in South Africa in the rest of her discussion that followed the excerpt but focussed her discussion on 'white voices'. Furthermore, she accused the liberal media and more progressive parties of disseminating 'fake news'. Her claim that criticism of the Nationalists was "fiction", "twisted" and "bitter", in this case concerning their colour policy, appears at odds with the ethics of journalism, which appeals for fair, honest and balanced reporting. Waring was trained by her father, Arthur Barlow, as political journalist, but mostly wrote opinion pieces about the politics of the day. The form of her journalistic endeavours, therefore, could possibly account for the lack of balanced reporting because she was writing *her* "opinion". Yet, these opinion pieces collected as part of her autobiographical texts shed light on her subjectivity formation in relation to the dominant white discourses of the time. Waring's subjectivity as deployed through her autobiographical "I"s

opinions about racial politics exemplifies her privileged position. As Verwey and Quayle observe "whiteness is historically linked to privilege" (556). Despite her protestation about her disempowered position as woman in her society, her privileged position as both white person and wife of a cabinet minister gave her access to media outlets and an audience for her opinions. She used this opportunity, afforded to her by said privileged position, to further entrench dominant discourses on whiteness confirmed by her dismissal of white opposition parties and lack of mention of the activist endeavours on the part of black (and racially mixed) political parties. Waring's racial subjectivity not only conformed to the geo-political and cultural white discourses of her time, she textually further enforced and disseminated these ideologies through her opinion pieces.

The following extract discusses one of the few instances where Waring referred to an individual black person. While Joyce and Frank Waring were travelling in Australia, South Africa was declared a Republic on 31 May 1961 (*Stones* 70). On this day, an article appeared in the Australian press written by Sydney Williams, described by Waring as "a Canadian Negro" (*Stones* 70), who had travelled through South Africa shortly before the article appeared. Waring quoted from Williams' article and then proceeded to insert her own thoughts on his statements:

> 'Republic Day will signal mass demonstration against repression. If these become riots, the guns will bark again … South Africa's black millions want peaceful evolution' (I had always thought this was what we were giving them rather than bloody independence!) (70)

Waring's political opinions and prejudice are clearly expressed in this extract. Her thoughts on what constitutes "bloody independence" are difficult to ponder if she thought the National Party's policies were not bloody. Furthermore, she never wrote whether "mass demonstration against repression" occurred or whether 'guns barked'. In fact, protests and strikes were planned by members of underground resistance movements but were quashed by police before they could properly commence (Verwoerd ordered raids of the townships). Thus, even in cases where Waring referred to individual black people, she summarily dismissed them shortly after mention, as though she did not consider their opinion worthy of attention. For instance, she was more upset by "overseas sympathy […] FOR the blacks" (*Sticks* 199) than by the article written by the so-called "Negro", Williams, in support of anti-apartheid demonstrations. Apparently, by comparison,

Waring struggled to dismiss international news, as she paid attention to the *white* international press.

My examination of Waring's textual strategies of self-representation has illustrated that her subjectivity, formed in accordance with the dominant white political ideologies of her time, is revealed through the scripting of subjectivity in her autobiographical texts. With reference to other scholars' work cited here, her writing exhibits the supposed 'transparency' of whiteness that cannot examine itself as category; reveals a 'blindness' to the fallacies of white superiority; textually, other races become invisible in her writing; her portrayal of her own race and other races exhibits the norm of whiteness in learning what 'not to see' and 'not to know'. She utilised techniques of 'non-verbalisation' and 'embellishment' in relation to her discussion in opinion pieces when trying to articulate the complicated race politics of South Africa, deploying her subjectivity through textual means to further endorse white superiority. Her subjectivity in relation to gender was constituted in opposition to patriarchal society and androcentric South African politics. However, she internalised dominant discourses around respectable femininity and womanhood, attested to by her expressed desire in the text to be feminine, beautiful and in "need of a Boss". Read retrospectively, Waring's self-fashioning texts are self-defeating in their portrayal of the protagonist. Her failure to examine the power structures in her society, interrogate the strictures of National Party policies, question her own assumptions, move beyond her own feminist concerns, and to advocate for more than her own selfish apprehensions, leads readers of her text to the conclusion that her political concerns, in spite of demonstrating/portraying a strong protagonist, were "piffling". Waring's subjectivity formation diverges significantly from those of Molteno and Smit. The form of life writing she practised, constructed as political autobiographical texts with supposed public appeal in tone and content, might partly account for this. In the following chapter I investigate these continuities and discontinuities identifiable in the subjectivity formation and discursive practices of each of the three women investigated in this dissertation and suggest some future avenues for research.

Chapter Five
Conclusion

So far, this dissertation has suggested that the formation of white South African female subjectivity (1868-1977), as revealed through the lens of the three women's life writing studied, is partly relational and embodied. I have attempted to show, in my analyses of the three selected subjects' life writing, the complexity of subjectivity formation; how the socio-cultural, geo-historical, and economic circumstances, coupled with other markers of subjectivity construction that give rise to the unique circumstances that shape a subject, such as gender, race and ethnicity, influence subjectivity formation. Subjectivity, it became apparent, is not static. I demonstrated, in the process of accumulating experience, knowledge or life exposure, subjectivity morphs and reshapes to accommodate these accruals. My findings indicated that subjectivity is *multifaceted*, constituted by many related and unrelated factors. Subjectivity as relational and embodied, therefore, does not fully account for the intricacy of South African female subjectivity formation when one considers the multiplicity of other factors that determine subjectivity such as context (historical situatedness, socio-cultural circumstances, etc.) and the personal experiences of each subject. Therefore, I examined factors and interrelated axes particular to each woman's individual subjectivity formation to address circumstances specific to their context. Concerning the structure of this chapter, I first provide a synopsis of each chapter in the dissertation, and then discuss the continuities and discontinuities in the subjects' life writing to comment on the insights gained about what constituted the respective subjectivities of Molteno, Smit and Waring, as revealed through their writing. In the process, I reflect on the heterogeneous nature of female subjectivity and the complex circumstances related to each subject's subjectivity formation. In the remainder of this chapter, I consider the limitations of this study, comment on the difficulties I experienced while conducting this research, reflect on the contributions of this dissertation to (South African) women's life writing studies, and suggest avenues for future research.

Chapter One of this dissertation detailed the aims of the study, justified my choice of selected subjects, situated the research within the larger field of South African women's life writing, explained germane theoretical approaches and relevant criticisms, outlined the methodology, and pondered ethical considerations related to archival and life writing research. Chapter Two

suggested that Molteno's life writing, the communication between her and her partners, and the life writings about her (such as her sister's journal) could be termed what I call the development of a lesbian discourse, which was constructed in lieu of the absence of sexual discourses on lesbianism at the time. I argued that the silences around Molteno's sexuality significantly shaped her subjectivity and informed the modes and methods of her created lesbian discourse. Moving on from my discussion of her sexual subjectivity, in my reading of her private journals, which examined her reflections following her conversion to the Mazdaznan faith, I argued that she understood her body relationally, mediated through contemplations of religious teachings regarding a person's body and soul. In the final section of Chapter Two, I focused on Molteno's autobiographical poetry to explore her changing opinions regarding women's issues and race. I argued that gender and race discourses of this period significantly influenced her subjectivity. My engagement with Smit's letters in Chapter Three attempted to show that her seminal text, *Sy kom met die Sekelmaan*, could be read as autobiographical fiction, because her subjectivity in her private life writing was formed in relation to two "I"s, differently named, as is the case with the Maria/Marié personas in *Sekelmaan*. I argued that the gendered ideology of Afrikaner nationalism tellingly impacted Smit's constituted subjectivity, influenced her decision to write in her private writing as at least two "I"s (she created other personas too), and that this negotiation of her subjectivity as well as the gendered ideology of Nationalist politics informed her decision to re-gender the actual recipient of her real life letters, Kalie Heese, to Anna in *Sekelmaan*. Although she seemingly internalised patriarchy, I showed that she still abraded against gendered discourses, which caused her considerable inner turmoil, possibly aggravating her division of self. In Chapter Four I explored Waring's three published autobiographical texts to discuss her subjectivity. Here I considered how dominant white racial discourses of the time (1950-1980) influenced her subjectivity formation, while, paradoxically, she resisted the pervasive gender ideologies that underwrote the patriarchal nature of the National Party. My analysis illustrated that she developed innovative self-representative writing strategies to combat possible criticism regarding her stances on gender, but that she did not employ these strategies to voice her thoughts on race relations, because her opinions adhered to dominant discourse. I have linked my exploration of the three subjects' life writings throughout with an emphasis on the significance of historical situatedness; the particularities of each subject's context, race, ethnicity, and gender. As subjects embodying culture, these women relationally navigated discourses within their societies and the temporalities

of their specific societies, to account for self. My analysis of the selected women's discursive self-fashioning practices attempted to show the importance of historical, social, cultural, political and economic intersections which constitute female subjectivity in all its diversity.

Continuities and Discontinuities

The use of an agentive "I" is a determinable feature of all three women's life writing. The "I" is used in life writing practices to deploy and script the author's subjectivity. The "I" becomes agentive by engaging with the user's emotions, surroundings, cultural specificity and its socio-political contexts. Through the autobiographical act, writing the "I", recalling an experience, narrating an event, discursively making sense of the "I"s environment, the author's "I" becomes agentive, and both *produces* and *deploys* subjectivity. This agentive "I", relaying everyday life experiences, mediating the self, relationally, through contextual social and cultural frameworks, becomes a "social theorist" (Butler *Giving* 8) as mentioned in the introduction. Asserting their agency through the use of "I"s in varied life writing genres and forms, reflecting on the surroundings which constituted their becoming, the three selected women reflected on their societies and societal discourse in their writing. In articulating thoughts on race relationships, Molteno, for example, opined that "[f]air play is a jewel little cherished in South Africa with regard to the people of colour".[184] Thus, by accounting for self, the "I"'s relationship to Others, Molteno had to, metaphorically speaking, 'theorise' societal discourses on race, criticising race relationships to actively situate her own "I". Smit felt compelled to split her "I" in two, in one excerpt discussed from her private writing, she assigned one "I", Hettie, to "dote" and "venerate"[185] on paper, to be alive on paper, where she felt she could truly be herself. The other "I" accentuated the gendered expectations of her society: Hessie's role was to conform to societal expectations, marry a squint-eyed farmer, brewing him his daily cup of coffee. To demarcate the roles assigned to the "I"s in the particular excerpt, Smit had to reflect on her society to understand cultural expectations. Smit recognised that in her male-dominated society women's roles were predetermined and that becoming a woman writer might prohibit her from achieving female ideals such as marriage. She therefore opted to split, to divide or separate her "I" in two, one agentive, living on paper, the other a fabrication who could be "popular"[186] in the real world. Waring's

[184] E.M. Molteno: Letter to Caroline Murray. UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 17 May 1923. p. 1.
[185] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/27. 15 December 1932. pp. 1-8.
[186] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 111/27. 15 December 1932. pp. 1-8.

narrating "I" similarly reflected on her society. Paradoxically, she conformed to and resisted the reigning hegemonic white discourses of her society. Agentively, the "I" challenged patriarchy and produced troubling discourses on race relations. By asserting her "I", producing counter-discourse through self-representative acts in the form of a gender critique, Waring metaphorically 'theorised' the patriarchal nature of her society to dismantle it. However, as discussed, her inability to acknowledge the power structures underscoring dominant white racial and gender discourses hindered her attempts at critical societal reflection.

The body's centripetal and centrifugal import to the selected women's subjectivity formation was discussed throughout. All three women's respective subjectivities were markedly embodied. As subjects shaped by their respective cultures (either in acceptance or rejection thereof), it stands to reason that society's perception of the female body and its assigned place within society had an impact on the three women's relationship to their bodies and their subjectivity formation. As shown, biologically essentialist notions of women within their respective societies determined their labour opportunities (whether certain professions were 'acceptable' or not), excluded women from political participation, determined the acceptability of women to contribute to cultural practices such as writing. Judeo-Christian doctrines and later Mazdaznan spiritualist teachings moulded Molteno's perceptions of and relationship with her body. During her youth, she experienced the body as an impediment, later, as a mere "garment"[187] and finally, as "marvellous",[188] central to her "soul" or subjectivity, integral to who she thought she was and how she perceived herself. When younger, she physically manifested, in her body, her mental troubles, arguably a result of not being able to articulate her sexuality in her society. Smit suffered from an "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar 45) in her attempts through writing to enter a masculine terrain. Her body in her society assigned her to domestic roles, to be a wife and mother. Amidst intense inner turmoil, she struggled to reconcile her desire to become an author with her longing for "the safety of a house and a married existence", which she professed to loathe, to enable her to "face" (Smit qtd. in Alberts 171) her society by attaining these ideals. To solve, at least partly, this struggle between her own desires and Afrikaner nationalism's gendered expectation of humans with a female body, she creatively split her subjectivity to arguably allot diverging aspects of her personhood to two or more personas. Her belief that she was not beautiful and that this lack of

[187] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 9 August 1923.
[188] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 65. 9 August 1923.

physical appeal could hinder her chances of obtaining the perceived female ideals of wifehood and motherhood, further aggravated her struggles. Like Smit, Waring chafed against restrictions placed on women because of their biological difference. She agentively addressed in her writing the injustices of white South African gendered society (1950-1980) and challenged the construction of this "man-made world" (*Lady* 28) that considered women as "property" (*Lady* 29). However, she internalised patriarchal conventions of femininity and what it meant to be a woman or to be considered a successful woman. Her *white* body, on the other hand, shaped her racial subjectivity and she adhered to dominant discourses that purported the superiority of whiteness. Thus, I have shown these three women's subjectivities were embodied. As I have demonstrated in the previous chapters, not only is subjectivity formed and housed inside a specific body, but the body as subject carries cultural markers such as gender, race, perceptions of beauty, which allocate meaning, restriction, value and limitation in society, noticeably influencing the way a body's, or subject's, subjectivity is formed.

I argued that Molteno, Smit and Waring's subjectivities were relationally constituted and navigated. As mentioned in the introduction, subjectivity is shaped and reshaped by and through experience, but experience is "simultaneously social and subjective, collective and individual" (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 53), and hence experience is accrued relationally. Social frameworks, the strictures of respective societies, dominant cultural ideologies and discourses inform experience, which is negotiated through a "you" or "others". According to Butler, accounting for oneself requires a "you" to filter the narrative of self through the process of 'telling' one's story (2-40). Even though some of the materials discussed in relation to the three subjects were private, the "I" who penned the subject's experience was mediated through societal frameworks which gave rise to that particular "I". Molteno's prayer journals were written in conversation with God, her journals from the 1920s were intended for her family as audience, and her letters sent to lovers, family and acquaintances addressed recipients specifically. Even while practising, arguably, the most intimate form of life writing, the diary/journal, Molteno evoked God or her family as audience to account for self through a "you" or others. Her relationship to her body when younger was notably influenced by public perceptions of the female body, and her relationship to her body was thus formed relationally, internalising public discourses and others' opinions. As mentioned in my discussion of Smit, it appears that she preferred to practise forms of life writing with an audience in mind. She created an imaginary friend, Ione, to write to in her diary when she was a

teenager, her pseudo-letters (which also constituted a form of diary) were written with Louw in mind and finally, her letters to friends were generally self-reflexive and self-exploratory. Therefore, as I have argued, the life writing forms practised by Smit suggest that she utilised her writing as a tool to relationally resolve or ponder questions of interiority. Waring's "I" formed in accordance with dominant white discourses of the time, her relational others were white; she endorsed ideologies which placed the Other, people of colour, in a category of 'less' human than her relational others. However, concerning her critiques on gender, I discussed how she internalised others' opinion about femininity and women's need of a "Boss" (*Lady* 3). She thus relationally mediated her perceptions of acceptable womanhood.

Form, or the different subgenres of life writing employed to aesthetically style self-representative "I"s, determined to a degree my ability to examine the selected women's subjectivity construction. The private gaze into Molteno's innermost thoughts made possible by her written prayer journals, diaries, letters and autobiographical poetry facilitated an examination of various circumstances, political events, everyday occurrences and societal discourses informing her subjectivity. The forms of life writing she utilised for self-representation regularly reflected on both mundane and significant affairs in her socio-political context: she frequently detailed her thoughts on religion, politics, love, race relations, and her society, which offered insight into circumstances shaping her subjectivity. Smit's letters were self-exploratory, used as an outlet for her emotions and the turmoil she experienced. Her forthright and honest "gush[ing]"[189] to friends revealed her thoughts on dominant gendered discourses and she narrated in detail her responses to societal expectations of women. Smit, to an extent, reflected on her own subjectivity formation in these letters, which eased and influenced my analysis of her writing. Conversely, the public nature of Waring's autobiographical texts, her assertion that she chose any side of an argument to suit her "impish" (*Hot Air* 92) humour, complicated my analysis. I had to call into question the veracity of her expressed opinions: did she really mean what she wrote? Though equally possible that Molteno and Smit obfuscated or censored their life writing, as researchers we are prone to more easily believe the 'truth' of diaries or letters but will question public autobiographical texts such as Waring's. Yet, as mentioned in Chapter One, all utterances in an autobiography "even if inaccurate or distorted, is a characterization of its writer" (Smith and Watson *Reading* 15), thus, even if not

[189] J. Kruger: NALN, HS collection, Cuttings, "Haar jeugvriend Kalie Heese vertel... Die geheim agter Hettie Smit se boek." No further information available.

'truthful', Waring's writing reveals her character. What was exposed about Waring in her autobiographical texts regarding her straightforward critique and support of respective aspects of white South African politics engendered my analysis of her subjectivity formation. Form is only one aspect that highlights the textual discontinuities in the three women's respective constituted subjectivities. Hereafter, I briefly summarise central elements unique to each woman's textual aesthetics and the ways their subjectivity was revealed through self-representative techniques.

Motherhood, as sexual, religious and political, came to the fore as a core feature in Molteno's subjectivity formation. Though not a biological mother or "lifegiver[…]" (Walker "Conceptualising Motherhood" 437) like Waring and Smit (who was not a mother though during the period in which she wrote the letters I examined), she creatively explored different notions of motherhood which influenced the construction of her subjectivity. A key aspect of Molteno's life writing when she was a younger woman was the impact of the absence of lesbian discourses in her environment on her sexual subjectivity: she and her lovers then innovatively borrowed from other existing discourses to create their own, what I term, lesbian discourse. Religion appears to have had a more pronounced effect on Molteno's subjectivity than in the cases of Smit and Waring (at least, what can be discerned from reading their available life writing). Judeo-Christian and Mazdaznan teachings notably shaped Molteno's consciousness of self: she frequently evoked God and later the Cosmic Mother[190] in her life writing to mediate her thoughts on personal and political issues. Her autobiographical poetry, to a degree, appears to have been a creative outlet to reflect on social issues and she deployed her subjectivity in the construction of these verses.

Smit was the only subject who used multiple personas in her writing. However, I discussed only "Hettie" and "Hessie" in detail. I argued that the creation of multiple personas or more than one "I", and hence, her "bifurcated being",[191] was a unique textual technique developed to attribute certain perceived unwanted character traits to other "I"s. Smit seemingly created these textual (and maybe non-textual) other "I"s to protect herself from perceived criticism: whatever she considered as too wayward, sentimental or cheeky was shifted onto "Hessie", shielding "Hettie", the primary "I". Her subjectivity was therefore constituted by different demarcated aspects of her personality, different "I"s she named individually. Arguably, *Sekelmaan*, an autobiographical fiction, was

[190] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 6. 28 September 1926. p. 1.
[191] H. Smit: NALN, HS collection, RGN collection 091 SMI, Dn. 11/56. November 1933. p. 6.

published as a novel to protect Smit from public criticism. Permeating Smit's letters is an awareness of her society and said society's expectations of women to be *volksmoeders*. Employing innovative writing techniques, Smit's subjectivity therefore formed to circumvent or negotiate public perception: *tension* underscores this formation. The sexist gender discourses disseminated by Afrikaner nationalism *significantly* shaped Smit's subjectivity, therefore making gender discrimination a prominent feature of her subjectivity formation, maybe more so than the other two subjects studied.

Considering Molteno's condemnation of South Africa's race relations and an absence of racial awareness in Smit's letters, Waring's endorsement of the racist policies implemented by the National Party, her acceptance of ideologies purporting the superiority of whiteness, sets her apart. The formation of Waring's subjectivity, conforming to dominant discourses on whiteness and contra-sexist gender relations in her society, differs from those of Smit and Molteno. In general, Waring's tone is more assertive than that of the other two subjects. She unrestrainedly, with force, offered her opinions in public: her narrating "I" was forthright, cheeky and witty. Yet, her critique of patriarchy and imbalanced gender relationships in her society required her to develop writing strategies that either caricatured her or relied on self-deprecating humour to offset her criticism of men. Her inclusion of visual and textual elements in relation to her self-representation is unique. Her self-representative strategies, because she wrote texts for publication, differs from those of Smit and Molteno. Waring is the only subject I examined who was a wife and mother (Smit's writing was penned before her marriage and before she became a mother). Motherhood and wifehood impacted her subjectivity formation in different ways. As discussed, she seemingly did not struggle to reconcile her career and writing with motherhood but received criticism from the public for being a 'bad' wife. The following section discusses the limitations of this project, the contribution made by this dissertation and possible avenues of future research.

Limitations, Scope for Future Research and Impact of Study

This thesis examined white middle-class women's subjectivity formation through the lens of their life writing, reflecting on a certain period of South African history. I did not initially set out to examine white women or middle-class women. At first, I planned to include Noni Jabavu's life writing, but for reasons mentioned below, I had to choose between Jabavu and Waring. The aim of this dissertation, in part, was to examine women's life writing neglected in scholarship. Jabavu's

life writing has received considerable attention by scholars and I have since learned that a PhD and biography on her life and work is in progress, therefore, I decided to shift my focus to white women's life writing, opting to include Waring's texts that have received *mention*, not in-depth examination, by scholars. My decision to examine the problematic writings of Waring was not taken lightly. But, after encountering Sarinjeive's assertion that to ignore white women's texts that express racist sentiments is to ignore the brutalities of the past and silence history (105), I felt it necessary to persevere and brave an analysis of Waring's writing.

It was only at a later stage of this project that it dawned on me that the selected subjects were all middle-class women. Examining middle-class women's subjectivity formation is problematic for its exclusion of working-class women, and I suspect sourcing material would be more complicated than what I have experienced in this already burdened task. Therefore, I acknowledge the possibilities of such an expanded focus for future research. Moreover, I recognise my dissertation does not offer an exhaustive or representative discussion of South African female subjectivity formation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of South African history. Each person's subjectivity is as unique as the circumstances and societies that shape subjects. My dissertation has offered possible methods of investigating constructed female subjectivity in the delineated era which can be applied to other subjects. Despite the limitation of this study, I feel that my research contributes to the scholarly archive on women's life writing and subjectivity formation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in its exploration of a selection of women's life writing previously ignored or neglected, and this is what I attempted to do in this project.

Time and word constraints played a significant role in the choice of material included or omitted in this study. The nature of archival research further influenced my decision-making processes vis-à-vis what I could investigate or had to omit. Omissions were sometimes, strictly speaking, not necessary, but ethical considerations prompted me to exclude what I regarded as sensitive information. To clarify my approach and its limitations I provide a few examples. To construct a short working biography on Betty Molteno required nine months of sifting through the archival materials, gathering evidence, transcribing documents and finally compiling a partial biography of her life. To compile the first draft of Chapter Two, given the length of time required to gather and then sort through archival sources, took eleven months. The overwhelming amount of available materials in the Betty Molteno archive in conjunction with the limited time for completion and

word constraints of this dissertation necessitated me to select certain topics and materials relevant to my discussion, while shelving others. It simply was impossible to read through all the available archival material. The material therefore offers much for further research. The aims of this thesis (investigating embodied and relational female subjectivity) and researcher subjectivity likewise influenced my decisions to include or omit certain documents and topics. My chapter on Smit was equally challenging and time consuming. One noteworthy difficulty pertaining to Chapter Three was to choose excerpts which best illustrated my argument: my suggestion, for example, that she struggled with an "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar 45), could have been substantiated by many other examples from her letters. Incidentally, there were countless more instances where she wrote as "Hettie" or "Hessie" that I could have cited. Yet again, word limitation and researcher subjectivity – what I regarded as central to the argument – guided my selection of excerpts from Smit's letters. However, what is available in the public archives of Molteno and Smit offers thought-provoking, valuable materials that can be explored in a variety of ways, using frameworks and theoretical approaches other than my own.

One persisting difficulty I experienced was to locate germane criticisms. Penelope Hetherington's overview article concerning the historiography of women's history written in English proved valuable in my search for sources about white, middle-class South African women from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She mentions that "the very limited historiography concerning white women is usually about working-class women – prostitutes, garment workers, and white servants – and is sometimes written by men" (261) but that a general "search for the history of the white women of South Africa reveals that there is substantial literature, often biographical, on South African women novelists" (Hetherington 262). Intriguingly, by 1993 when Hetherington's article was published, literary scholars had contributed more to the extant historical scholarship on middle-class white women than historians by examining women authors. The hiatus in South African scholarship regarding white middle-class women can be attributed to two factors. Firstly, up until 1960, most historians were men and they ignored women in their histories. Secondly, the first South African feminist historians (all white), from 1970 onwards, focused on black women's history and black women's socio-historical position, necessarily a form of protest against the apartheid government (Hetherington 241-269). Although Hetherington published the article in 1993, no substantial amount of historical research has been contributed to the field in the subsequent decades as my research has revealed: it is *very* difficult to locate any information, such

as a social history of middle-class white women in the Cape Colony during the nineteenth century, or research on "piffling" (Gordimer 26) middle-class feminism of the 1950-1980s. Therefore, discernible lacunae persist in South African white middle-class women's historiography. My study attempted to address, in part, the above-mentioned gaps in the literature, but yet again, a *literary* scholar, not historian, addressed these paucities. My *literary* analysis of these women's life writing and subjectivity formation necessarily cannot account for an entire period or subject in *history*. Although some research has been published in recent decades (Daymond, Driver, Meintjies, Molema, Musengezi, Orford, Rasebotsa, Allan, Wright 2003; Erlank 1996[192]; Ross 2004; Malherbe 2010; Cilliers 2013; Duff 2015), large-scale archival recovery and the unearthing of available documents remain necessary to investigate the imbricated legal, political, economic, cultural and social frameworks and lifeworlds of white middle-class women in the Cape Colony, as well as the history of white middle-class feminism (1950-1980). An examination of, for example, the group Aksie 75 Action, mentioned in Chapter Four, could offer insights into the ideological and practical concerns or conceptualisations of white middle-class feminism in the 1970s. As mentioned in Chapter Two, my arguments about a lesbian discourse in Molteno's life writing and writings to and about her is, to my knowledge, the first study on nineteenth-century South African lesbianism; this line of inquiry calls for extensive research. In 1993, Hetherington wrote: "But, so far, there is little evidence that historians are ready to confront the problems of writing the history of sexuality in South Africa" (266). Although much research has been conducted in recent decades on sexuality in South Africa and male homosexuality, my study indicates that the history of female homosexuality has not been explored. In conclusion, it seems research of white women's history and writings is required in an effort to address, as Sarinjeive notes, the epistemological violations (105) that amount to a "sanitized" (105), or rather, incomplete history of South African women. In the process of knowledge production and a reinvestigation of the past, an examination of all women's life writing regardless of the subject's race, class, ethnicity or gender orientation is required to account for *South African* history.

[192] For more information regarding available publications on white middle-class women in the nineteenth century Cape Colony, see footnotes 3 and 4 on page 75 of Natasha Erlank's article "Writing women in(to) early nineteenth century Cape Town (1996).

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Appendix A:

Betty Molteno Poetry

Baptism by Water – 15.6.23.[193]

Star of the Western Sea
Mary, Mother of the Christ to be
Come O come again to we
Of thy love to make us more free.

Turbulent are the waters to-day,
Fierce storms over them play,
Humanity's little boat with difficulty doth float
Tempestuously is tossed Humanity's boat.

O Mary, Mother of the Christ
Show us how to him to lift,
Spirit eyes that we may Him see
Walking steadily on the tempestuous sea.

It waters do not engulf He,
Sometimes He even falls asleep
While His disciples anxious vigil keep
You are the divine She,

Now reappearing on earth!
Your Son is taking fresh rebirth
In the hearts of storm-tossed Humanity
Working He is to bring about Unity.

Mary, the divine in woman,
Through you the woman's soul is being reborn.
O womanhood you had become so forlorn,
Crowned you were by so many a thorn.

Your brows they were pierced,
By thorns O so many
You could be helped now only by Mary
She bid you make the sacrifice dread.

Cut of sheltered homes many of you must go,
The sorrow of the homeless you must know,

[193] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 9. 15 June 1923. pp. 1-3.

Driven into prisons and brothels.
To enter them your divine missions.

Florence Nightingale took her place,
In the hospitals of the Crimea.
Death traps were they till she appears.
Lady of the lamp in them shone your fair face.

Bearer of the Light were you,
Flowers sprang up where your feet did press.
Weary souls in you found rest
Womanhood's divinity you did show.

O fateful, nineteenth century,
Your were preparing for the entry
Of Womanhood upon the world stage,
She on it must write a new page.

No more babies, said some of us
Dare we bring into such a world.
Into the arena we were hurled,
Out into the mud, the blood, the dust.

Your command was Go we must.
You were ever at our side,
Stormy waters glowing wide,
Mary in you we still did trust.

Each of us must do out bit.
Sometimes all alone to sit,
As shadows among shadows to flit,
Into our appointed place we had to fit.

Crashing down on every side,
Our old world piecemeal fell down,
Thorn on thorns still us did crown,
We were of the lost, of the forlorn.

We were out in the thick of the storm,
Fiercely blew the winter wind,
Difficult it was a footing to find
Alone in the wilderness we did roam.

Some Saviours did arise,
William Stead went into hell,
Of its evil deeds he came back to tell.

His Maiden's Tribute in our souls rang

Bidding us in his footsteps follow.
Not rest content with good intentions
But rise up to remove the awful inhibitions
Of him courage we must borrow.

And Josephine Butler, that lovely star,
Her only daughter fell from a high window,
That to her mother became the signal,
And she of William Stead was a co-worker.

That did she not dare
Girlhood from damnation to save?
Purity's banner high she did wave
Her soul with the so-called fallen and lost she did share.

And valiantly she did declare.
Womanhood does not love the mire.
The poorest, the feeblest still aspire,
She must have room, space, air.

She must no longer rot in the slums
That civilisation is ever making.
Saviours their lives were spending
To make an end of these foul dens.

God's precious human flowers
Smirched were they in their early hours.
Men devoured by the demon of sensuality
Were losing all traces of divinity.

Youth and maiden alike were flung
Into the witches' cauldron.
In vain for them shone the glorious sun.
The devil's bell for them had rung.

Saviours ever wrestled with the devil,
All the fair surface shows of life
They know lead only to blood and strife
They analysed the powers of evil.

Children must be nobly born,
Or how shall they walk on life's stormy waters.
They must be God's sons and daughters,
Not lost souls all forlorn.

Human beings must not be herded like sheep
That are meant for the butcher's knife,
With no other conception of the meaning of life
Than to be born, live, and die.

Baptism by water must be taught anew.
Some must learn its inner meaning
Or they will only go on aimlessly dreaming
A new road it will them show.

To learn to walk upon life's stormy waters
Begins the education of God's sons and daughters.
The old creeds must be reinterpreted
If they are to meet humanity's desperate needs.

It cannot be helped by dead creeds,
They cannot supply humanity's pressing needs.
Men and women must learn to stand together,
Hand in hand as sister and brother.

Union of South Africa. 11.6.23.[194]

O white Africa, What will happen to you
Under the Southern Cross?
New elements into the white blood will pass
What these are, as yet we vainly ask?

Powerful, stimulating essences are in you,
Rapid exchanges 'twixt life and death.
O enchantress! magically you work
We know not to what you are giving birth.

Varied elements of Europe are mingling
Cast into the melting pot of Africa.
How shall Europe reappear there?
What is elemental Africa to the mixture bringing?

Money, the god of our present civilisation,
Demands to be also your god.
But money alone cannot rule on the African sod.
Money, cannot make a new nation.

The old Dutch Boer well knew that,
Yet on land and cattle his heart was set

[194] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 9. 11 June 1923. pp. 1-3.

And this compelled conflict with the native born
He could not submit to be off his land shorn.

But the conflict between native and Boer
Admitted of accommodation between them,
Neither was strong enough to destroy the other
Ultimately they would become sister and brother.

Not perhaps in a surface way,
The rash mingling of blood
Would breed mischief on Africa's sod
Mighty forces would on each play.

They would learn to respect one another
Realising great gifts were in each,
They would one another much teach
And learn the deep meanings of sister and brother.

Each was in his own way supreme,
For the spirit of God moved within
Though neither had yet learnt it was sin
His misunderstood brother to kill.

And Britain she also put her oar in
In African waters she was determined to swim.
But Steam had not yet begun its work to do
And a long way Britishers had to go

To get across 6,000 miles of sea,
Meant only a sprinkling of Britain got over
But among them was many a daring rover
Who in Britain could not get his wings free.

And he had to burn his boats ere he sailed away
Only one road was not open to him,
He knew he must in African waters learn to swim
Back to Britain he would not be able to stray.

Roots will have to go down deep.
If in Africa a place he is to keep,
The African mother will have none of him
She will not learn him how to swim

Unless of her he becomes a part.
And begins to feel the throb of her mighty heart.
She let him keep all of his European blood

That is fitted to live on Africa's sod.

But moulding, rekneading, remaking him,
Learn him how in Africa to swim.
And She it is that must be obeyed.
She it is that will not be gainsaid.

She, the so-called dark continent,
Will not to Europe's imperious will be bent,
She her own mighty work to do
And Europe will gradually this come to know.

Not in a day will the problem be solved,
Rhodes died ere he was fifty,
His eyes grown so dim and misty.
His earth body on the top of Mattoppos doth lie.

Perched up so high in the sky,
And now beside faithful Jamieson doth lie,
Much flurry and dust together they made
While on Africa's soil they stayed

Southern Africa they covered with blood so red.
How many human beings to death were bled,
Boer, British and native mingled their blood
Deeply stained was the South African sod.

Hurly burly, strife, confusion
Reigned visibly on earth,
Machine guns dealing death and damnation
Would they give birth to a united nation?

And the nineteenth century was coming to a close,
When Southern Africa was overwhelmed with those woes,
And her desert regions was sown with human bones
Mingled with the scanty herbage and many coloured stones.

And the wailing of women and the sobs and the moans,
And eyes out of which the light had died,
And bleeding hearts to God ever cried,
And the land covered by a sea of sorrow wide.

Blood and tears, sobs and groans,
The dove of peace had flown away
Out of men's hearts long did it stay.
Blood and tears, sobs and moans.

O Rhodes! I saw you as a soul in hell,
Lazarus brought you no drop of water
To cool the anguish of your soul
Not in your earth body could you be made whole.

But some of the penalty was paid
Ere your body was laid in its grave
High up on the Mattoppos!
Has it there at last found repose.

Are you now free of this world's vain shows?
Is your eager soul still at work
To bring real union of hearts in Africa to birth?
Are you trying to heal her soul and spirit woes?

Have you learnt that it was a great mistake
Such a short cut to try to make?
The job could not be done so quickly,
It could not be finished ere you saw fifty.

But you have left us some mementoes
That do not lead to bitter woes.
You did not Table Mountain close,
You knew it was a mighty healer of woes.

Does your spirit now up there walk?
In wise and loving fashion does it talk?
Saying to the weary human race –
Come up here – I have kept for you a place.

The Divine Mother. 20.3.24[195]

O Love Divine, you shine
High to-day in the sky,
Up to you I fly,
And drink of your divine wine.

Out of the body you take me,
You are making me new eyes to see
Priceless gifts coming from the sun,
As light weaves its filigree.

I have been away to Africa,
Talking to dear ones there

[195] E.M. Molteno: UCTL, SC, MMFP, BC 330, Box 12. 20 March 1924. pp. 1-2.

Now I am a bit tired,
Yet your light is shining on me.

I am a child of the sun.
In the sun's filigree web I also am spun.
The sun has helped to make my body,
The sun goes on clearing it of shoddy.

O light, light, light resplendent,
Gleaming with colours iridescent
Pouring on to me present on present.
O filigree work I am with you blent

The divine mother is taking me into her arms,
She is teaching me new, lovely charms,
She is pouring into my soul balms
With sun she me purifies and warms.

I will make thee whiter than show.
Sunshine is bleaching thee.
You my filigree work begin to see,
The sun is shooting arrows from a powerful bow.

Never mind though you know so little
That little is infinitely precious
Light into your body rushes
Making it less volatile and brittle.

Weaving it with yet finer meshes
New life it experiences.
I am come to give you life, life more abundant,
Life with colour and sound resplendent.

Every need will be supplied abundantly,
To the children of the sun,
As their daily course they run,
They will be clothed with light resplendently.

Ask and ye shall receive abundantly.
Of the splendours of new regions be made free,
With new eyes you the sun will see.
You will not fear its dazzling brilliancy.

Light, light is still our cry,
Light, more light ere I die
Out of this temporary flesh body

That has been so filled with useless shoddy.

I will create you anew.
Wonders to you I will show,
Ere out of your flesh body you go
Only to your light be ever true.

Many specks and splashes are on you,
Through the mire you have had to pass,
You will get through it at last.
Light, more light into your body will pass.

New houses we will have to build
Not dungeons where humans are slowly killed,
Where finer faculties are starved and chilled,
So in heaven it is not willed.

Man must look up into the sun,
And not himself into burrows put,
All the light of heaven out to shut.
Thus he will a royal course run

Realising that he is a child of the sun.
The New Age will have begun.
Out of the sun's filigree work he is spun.
With the sun his course he will run.

The dens, the casernes [*sic*], the prisons,
They are not for God's prisms.
Men are prisms of the sun
This knowledge to them has come.

Why shut themselves up in prisons,
When their purpose is to become God's prisms
They will see resplendent visions,
When they have escaped from their prisons.

New architects will be inspired,
They will not for money be hired.
Inspiration to them will be given.
That fetters off mankind be riven [*sic*].